

WHS PROJECT: PARKING CONSIDERATIONS

One of the great benefits of the proposed high school building project is that it can be built while the current high school is in use. In order to do so, the current parking lots will be used for active construction. Therefore, interim parking during construction is one of the planning efforts underway.

The Working Group

Last November, the School Building Committee (SBC) appointed a working group to sort through all possibilities and make a recommendation on interim parking. The *Parking and Transportation Working Group* included representation from the Schools, Public Works, Planning, Natural Resources, Recreation, Selectmen, Police, parents, and neighbors. Resources from the project's architects (SMMA) and the Town's traffic consultant (Beta) were also tapped.

The Challenge

The current HS parking lot has approximately 300 spaces. Faculty and staff will need 185-200 parking spaces during the project years. SMMA has indicated that during construction, only 30 spaces would be available on site. The Working Group decided these 30 on site spaces would accommodate handicapped, traveling faculty and visitor parking. Given the school's location with complications of wetlands, flood plain, protected parkland and neighborhood density, the following policy was established to guide decisions: During construction, parking spaces will be made available for faculty and staff only; there will be NO student parking.

Considerations

The Working Group considered the following options for interim faculty and staff parking:

- (1) on-street parking - determined to not be an option because the streets are too narrow for both parking on one side and two-way traffic even with no snow, and two-way traffic is needed to disperse traffic and not further degrade already overloaded intersections;
- (2) busing from one or two locations in Wellesley- still an option but expensive and least popular; and
- (3) proximal parking – find existing or create new parking within walking distance of WHS. It should be noted that nearby Washington Street has nearly 100 marked parking spaces, but the parking lane is a travel lane from 7:30 AM-8:30 AM weekdays, the timing of which has been reaffirmed by authorities.

The Working Group identified twelve parcels of public land near the high school on which Public Works gave an initial assessment. After considering parking yield, magnitude of costs, temporary or permanent value, disruption of natural resources, accommodation of school / league / public use, traffic impact, neighborhood impact,

pedestrian and auto safety, and complexity of permitting, a short list was sent to SMMA for layout and cost estimates. To be included in the cost estimates were any costs associated with creating the parking and lighting, accommodating any sport or activity that would be displaced, and returning the space to original use, as well as design and permitting fees, escalation cost, and contingency funds.

The short list results were:

1. Lee Field and tennis court parking lot for 172 spaces at \$1.2 million, including an improved Lee Field and changes to Phillips Park ball field;
2. Hunnewell Field tennis courts and lot for 203 spaces at \$2.1 million, including four rehabilitated courts and four new courts at Sprague, and three rehabilitated courts at Schofield;
3. Hunnewell Field tennis courts **lot only** for 32 spaces at negligible cost ;
4. State St gravel lot at west entrance to the football stadium for 26 of 31 spaces at \$170,000, including lighting and pavement as permanent upgrades; and
5. Hunnewell Field basketball courts w/tandem parking for 66 spaces at \$420,000, including rehabilitated courts and upgrades to the existing access road where Smith Street meets Rice Street, across from the current HS parking lot.

Recommendation

The Lee Field and tennis courts options (#1 and #2 above), while including desirable permanent upgrades, were eliminated due to cost. The Working Group recommends the use of a combination of smaller sites for less capital outlay. The following combination of sites will yield the required spaces: The tennis court lot, the State Street gravel lot, Hunnewell Field basketball courts, the aqueduct behind the bank at State & Washington, and some additional spaces at Star Market and other nearby businesses. The total cost would be approximately \$600,000.

Timing

Approval of this recommendation is required from multiple town committees: School Committee, School Building Committee, Board of Selectmen, Natural Resources Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and both local and state Wetlands Commissions. The interim parking for the proposed project would need to be in place when teachers arrive to begin the 2009-2010 school year.

The School Committee will publicly discuss this recommendation on August 26th. A Public Forum to review the Parking recommendation will be held September 3rd at 7:30 PM in the Great Hall at Town Hall. On September 9th at Town Hall, the School Committee and Natural Resources Commission will break from their separate meetings

that begin at 7:30 PM to hold a joint meeting for the purpose of voting this interim parking recommendation.

The Working Group is also tasked with recommending a transportation plan and a permanent parking plan, currently works in progress.

Marlene Allen

Parking and Transportation Working Group Chair and School Committee Member