



PLANNING & BUILDING COMMITTEE

Merrimack School District
<http://www.isone.com/~merrpbc>

Minutes
November 24, 2003

Present: W. Morrison, C. Morrison, F. Rothhaus, T. Koenig and K. Powell

Excused: S. Heinrich

Also Participating: Judy Bezler and Andy Schneider

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 PM by W. Morrison.

Approval of Mastricola Renovation Report

As there had been some confusion regarding the final wording of the report, W. Morrison provided each member with a clean copy of the report and requested that the report be re-approved by the Committee. C. Morrison made a motion to approve the report as presented.

Second: F. Rothhaus. The motion passed unanimously.

Merrimack High Parking Issues

W. Morrison introduced J. Bezler and A. Schneider, representing the Merrimack High School parent group. They were a committee looking into the student parking situation at the high school.

J. Bezler and A. Schneider explained that they were unaware that the Committee had been involved in the planning of the current parking lot and the Committee was charged by the School Board to once again look into parking and traffic issues as all schools. They were glad to come before the Committee to brainstorm ideas about student parking at the high school.

There are 378 student parking spaces. There are 320 seniors. This meant that 60 parking spaces were made available by lottery for juniors and there are no parking spaces available for sophomores. There had been 85 juniors who participated in the lottery for the 60 spaces. J. Bezler and A. Schneider talked about the current parking rules and attempts to enforce them. Many students drive to school and park along O'Gara Drive, at town hall, in Connell's parking lot or anywhere they can. Another issue is the plagiarism of parking stickers. They explained that Nashua High gives parking privileges to seniors only. West High has off-site parking.

Committee members brought up snow storage issues and the loss of parking spaces due to the many dividers in the side lot. They also mentioned that in the C.I.P. there is a plan to combine and relocate the Superintendent's and Special Education Offices. This could result in these buildings giving way to additional parking spaces.

Another idea that was brought up was for the School District to purchase any (and all) land in the area surrounding both the high school and the Mastricola complex that might become available. This land could be used for both additional parking and additional classroom space.

Another problem that was raised was the fact that many student activities at the high school ended after the 4:30 PM late bus. These students have no way home unless they drive to school. Additional reasons for students needing to drive to school include getting to after school employment or getting to off campus athletic practice fields, like those at Reeds Ferry School.

J. Bezler told the Committee that they were looking into off-site parking, (for example, at the Commons) and providing a commuter bus to and from the lot.

C. Morrison said she had a problem with people who believe they have a right to drive to school. She also expressed concerns about any parking along or near the river.

K. Powell was felt that off-site parking might be a good temporary solution, and she had concerns about what to renovate the current parking lot or create new parking lots.

W. Morrison brought up the original parking plans the Committee had designed, which called for additional parking lots along O’Gara Drive near the tennis courts; but he pointed out these lots were to be used as extra parking for Mastricola Elementary School.

F. Rothhaus said he thought the district could save a lot in bussing costs if high school students drove and the high school promoted carpools. He noted that many high school students call the buses “looser cruisers” and refuse to ride them. He also stated that he thought the high school administration should make a rule and then enforce it.

There were questions about potential liability if the school organized carpools and there were accidents. The Harcross property was suggested as a possible off-site parking area. It was also suggested that someone look into how many parking spaces were be required by Planning Board standards if the high school was a office building.

C. Morrison raised environmental concerns regarding locating many huge parking lots in the area. J. Bezler asked if gravel was better than pavement.

A. Schneider told the Committee that he and J. Bezler have been surveying other school districts to see if they allow students to drive to school, if they have student parking lots, if they have student parking problems and how they handle them.

Another suggestion was to have “No Parking” signs placed along O’Gara Drive. However, another problem raised was that O’Gara Drive is basically school owned so that would put the burden on the School District to enforce the ban.

F. Rothhaus reiterated he felt that the high school administration needed to make good parking policy and then enforce it. He felt that some of the current rules could not be enforced. J. Bezler

told him that one of the problems has been that parents object when the parking rules are enforced.

A. Schneider told the Committee that the current parking fee pays for the parking monitor, who is responsible for reporting violations to the administration.

W. Morrison summed up the discussion by stating that some things that might be done include redesigning the parking lot and recommending the administration strictly enforce the parking policies.

J. Bezler told the Committee that she and A. Schneider are working with the Student Council to have a student forum for ideas to solve the problem as well as hold fundraisers to cover costs of additional parking lots.

F. Rothhaus stated he thought only seniors should have guaranteed parking spaces and a lottery was the easiest way to dole out any extra spaces.

W. Morrison asked J. Bezler and A. Schneider to keep the Committee apprised of any suggestions or any progress they might make toward solving the student parking problem at the high school and thanked them for coming to the meeting.

W. Morrison reminded Committee members there would be no meetings in December.

T. Koenig made a motion to adjourn. Second: K. Powell. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,