

Board of Selectmen
Meeting September 13, 2021
4 PM Zoom

The meeting was called to order at 5:00P M. Present, Chairman Cogliano, Selectmen Corinne Riley, Debra Panetta, and Michael Serino. Also, Town Manager Scott Crabtree, and Police Chief Ricciardelli and Superintendent Dr. David DeRuosi: All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Cogliano opened the meeting and asked if all audios would remain off until citizen's comments.

Dr. DeRuosi: "There were early problems with traffic and drop offs and no full bussing this year. The distance for bus service was a 2-mile radius from the school, and now it is down to 1.2 miles with four tier runs by buses. We need three individual start times. Schedule with Union to help with academic schedule. It is exceedingly difficult having to drop off two children at two separate places. One drops off, one picks up. Trying to work within the Covid guidelines.

Parking is the problem. Staggering early drop offs but then traffic starts backing up. Put No Standing Signs at Waybright. No early drop offs and more buses next year."

Selectman Cogliano: Question: "Why are there only two or three buses with only 5-8 kids on them? Is it Covid restrictions or cost? Should we stop charging fees for busing? If ridership is down, could you expand the limit to one mile during the next two weeks and at no charge for bus service?

Chief Ricciardelli: "We anticipated having some problems in the beginning. We looked at the Traffic Study and it was recommended to set staggered times for drop offs and pickups."

Superintendent of Schools: "We will be implementing a staggered system in the fall at the start of school 2021. We need to stagger a start time.

Selectman Cogliano: "Are we paying police details to manage the traffic? Chief Ricciardelli. stated that officers are working on their regular shift at Pearce and Main and Main and Vine. They could be taken off these details should they be needed elsewhere. If there is a better way, it would be great.

Chairman of the School Committee Tom Whittredge: "We have only been in school for three weeks and there are still some kinks in the road but it's getting better. The drop is better this week than in the beginning. Parking is the issue. Some ignore the 2:40 to 4:00 sign and they go right down the one way. Every kid has a car today. The drop off is better and the pickups need to improve. We have three weeks of school left. Can we try something the last two weeks of school? Just a thought. School Department on board with 2,700 students. Whatever is decided, we will do our best and thanks to the police. they have been extremely helpful."

Selectman Panetta: "The parking is our biggest problem. If we could change one way or hours. It would be much better.

Selectman Serino: "I have been there approximately ten times – mornings and afternoons. Signage would help – a one way sign and hours of drop off and pick up. Two-way, one-way needs to be clarified. Came out of Orchard and was almost hit. The flashing light on Route One is not working and should have a sign."

Police Chief Ricciardelli stated staggering times are the solution and asked the Super if it could be put in place for the next two weeks. Can we get one drop off area?"

Dr.DeRosie: Right now, you have the same starting times and trying to limit many runs. Parents can pull up all at the same time. In the fall, we could have earlier drop off times, get some relief from Covid restrictions and more busses would also help. It is too much structure. Selectman Serino agreed that the problem is parking. One afternoon he counted forty-nine cars parked on Orchard Avenue.

Selectmen Riley felt the issue is student parking and asked how many spaces are designated for students to park. She thought traffic could be alleviated with adding different stops. An early drop off time would make a significant difference. Staggered times would work, but town manager stated a longer traffic wait would be created. Maybe is there is not enough parking for students, may we need to put another floor on the parking lot.

Selectman Cogliano: "I noticed that to make Highland one way and Orchard; once they go into two lanes and if you want to come out and there is a car on the corner, you can't see what's coming. To me, it is a real trouble spot. Without proper signage, three lanes of traffic and people parking on both sides, its trouble."

Police Chief Ricciardelli.: "Put out more signs and send out notices to student to keep cars off the corner.

Selectman Riley: "Why do drivers go right at the end of Pearce Drive? Is that a promising idea?"

Police Chief: "If you lived west, they were directed you to go left onto the highway. It did help and there was less backup."

Selectman Cogliano asked that, between the green containers and parking spaces near the basketball court, has that area been looked and, if so, could we gain 40 50 parking spots? Dr. DeRousi stated that he will ask Mr. Nigro to look at it and submit estimate.

Mr. Edward LA Sala, Jr, 37 Highland Avenue: "Thanks to the selectmen for letting me know about the meeting. Our neighborhood was never informed about anything before. I also want to thank the principal for directing traffic with no authority to do so. I do not like two lanes on my street. There was a traffic study done and it suggested to use Pennybrook Road. The study stated that going south would be a one way going around the building and up Main Street. Staggered times would work too."

Robert Cerulli, 2 Orchard Avenue: "The parking on both sides makes it impossible for emergency vehicles to get through. I also have recycling concerns as they cannot reach customers if there is parking on both sides of the street."

Ryan Allocco, 6 Meadow Lane. He spoke about his concern about parking on Highland, Meadow and Orchard and parking on each corner. He could not get his Oil truck delivery or UPS, as their trucks could not go down the street. "I can't get in and out of my driveway. Kids leave trash, dogs going crazy. Students need to be educated and should show respect for the neighbors. It must stop."

Selectman Cogliano: "I saw kids walk right down the middle of the lawns, all the way down the street."

John Reppucci 19 Highland Ave. "In the morning, kids come down the street, two at a time, and I can't get out of my driveway. I must wait for the traffic to clear and then I am late for work. Something needs to be done."

Louis Moran, 2 Apple Lane: "I'm coming home in the morning at 7:20 but need to wait until 7:45 to get into my driveway. While waiting, I see kids dump off on the ramp then take a left. The big issue is safety."

Resident at 34 Highland Avenue. "I can't believe we are having this meeting after the school has already been built. What is the signage is going to say? Where do I park my car?"

Selectman Cogliano: "We are just coming up with suggestions - nothing is etched in stone. We are the traffic commissioners. If no parking signs are posted, we will deal with it. We want to produce a solution and it must work for everyone."

Selectman Serino suggested a site visit. "The Waybright one way in and one way out -can we have that here?"

Dr. DeRuosi: "The Waybright the volume is over 500 and there are two different drop offs."

Carol Morrissey 14 Orchard Avenue: "I flowered in front of the fence, but it was destroyed. It is challenging to get out of my driveway. There are still quite a few parking spaces in the school lot, and I am concerned about traffic coming to the sports arena."

Dr. DeRuosi: "I Will check to see if there are more parking spaces; there is also a fee. Kids need to be educated. More kids drive to school today. Cannot have carpools because of Covid. Any feedback is helpful. We went a full year without school and traffic. Seems it is a parking issue – an invasion of the neighborhood."

Resident at 34 Highland Avenue: "Making Highland a two way. I witnessed cars going the wrong way. Someone walking a dog could get hit with double lanes."

Winnie Okoye. 21 Orchard. Avenue stated: Signage for resident parking – but there is no one to enforce it. Friday morning 7:15 AM. I get to the end of the street to the stop sign car to my left

wanting to go right on Highland Ave. I saw a car behind her, and she went around her. I thought I was going to get hit. Just let them know it is not a permanent one way. Everyone is in a rush. Please tell parents to be careful."

Resident at 22 Highland Avenue: "There is a sign at Highland Avenue, more signage does not make sense. It is impossible to leave from 7:30 to 8 AM and to return home from 1:30 to 3:30 PM. Car's block driveways."

Sheila Mckoy, 832 Broadway: "This town is adapted to passing the buck; the selectmen, the high school. Safety is our main concern. Traffic problems and no one seems to care."

Selectman Cogliano: "I witnessed the traffic on several occasions and it's a mess. No one is passing the buck. We will straighten this mess out."

Tony Zachko, 19 Orchard Avenue: "Ditto to everything Sheila said. No one on Orchard Avenue was notified. Never had these issues before. There are parking spaces at the school, but students continue to park on Highland Avenue. We cannot tolerate all these cars invading our neighborhood."

Sheila Mckoy wanted to state that Selectman Serino, Riley and Panetta were wonderful.

Robert Camuso: Concerned about Highland Avenue one way. "Why aren't there sidewalks on both sides? It forces kids into the street. Why was this issue taken into consideration? Eighty percent of the kids walk on the right-hand side not where the sidewalk is. There should be another sidewalk. You must have double sidewalks. The issue is Main/Pearce, and Main/Vine Street intersections. Everything around the school is the problems. Cannot believe this traffic issue was not addressed. Need staggered times."

Selectman Cogliano: "Everything on the right side of Highland Avenue needs to be addressed. We should have installed sidewalks on both sides of Highland Avenue."

Donna Memont 32 Highland Avenue. "I agree, they said they were going to widen the street, but they said it would encourage speeding. We really do need a sidewalk." Two issues, parking, and traffic."

Dennis Dinitto, 28 Highland Ave. He thanked Selectman Cogliano for this meeting. "Everyone has covered what I wanted to say. Remote area to pick up. I look forward to resolving these issues."

Katherine Scott, "Agree with everything said. Not all kids back in school. Signs need to be enforced."

Lou Moran: "One question, are we utilizing the exit on Route One never see anyone using it. And need to tell parents more people are using it now. Coming along."

Ted La Sala: Highland Avenue: "Entrance on Route One. West Peabody. one way South and would force people to use the Route One exit. Find the traffic study on the Web. West side