

JOINT MEETING WITH BOARD OF EDUCATION ON MAY 5, 2008

Mayor Weinstein called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice of this Joint Meeting of the Mayor and Council and the Board of Education was published in the Record issue of May 1, 2008. Notices were also posted on the bulletin board located on the first floor of the Municipal Building and the Maurice Pine Free Public Library. Copies were mailed to The Community News and posted on the Borough of Fair Lawn Website. The notice identified the time and location of the Joint Meeting.

PRESENT: Mayor Weinstein, Deputy Mayors Swain and Tedeschi and Councilmembers Baratta and Trawinski (late).

BOARD OF EDUCATION: Mary Wallace, Elyse Frankel, Ed Carter, Gene Banta, John Mancinelli, Joseph Gilensen, Michael Rosenberg, Lisa Yourman and Cindy Jo Yuskatitis.

ALSO PRESENT: Manager Metzler, Municipal Clerk Kwasniewski, Attorney Rosenberg and Superintendent Watson.

COMMUNITY CENTER PARKING:

Mayor Weinstein welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that the purpose of the meeting is to continue the discussion on parking at the Community Center. The piece of property along the railroad tracks to Burke Place does belong to the Borough.

Ms. Wallaced indicated that after the meeting last September the Board appointed an ad hoc committee to study the situation. John Mancinelli chaired that committee. Mr. Mancinelli stated that Ms. Yuskatitis and Mr. Carter served on the committee with him. They investigated the impact on the Board of Education. He distributed a report which contained an executive summary and the findings on the Committee. The proposal was to extend the existing parking lot east on a 50-foot wide right-of-way between the NJ Transit railroad and Sasso Field. There was also an option to extend that parking lot with a driveway to the Burke Place intersection. The first proposal was single sided two-way parking lot. The second proposal was a one-way configuration with the exit at Burke/Bellair.

Using that 50 feet narrows the playing field that is beyond the right-of-way to the point where most of the activities would not be able to be played on that field. The Board would have to shift the field toward the track which would necessitate taking down the visitor's bleachers and relocating some of the track and field events. The home field bleachers would have to be converted to include the home field and visitors. He estimated that it would cost between \$750,000 to \$825,000 to regain a playing field. Every tree would have to be taken down which is a problem since that is the only shade on the playing field.

He summarized that the proposed configuration creates an enormous hardship and they would rather consider an alternate proposal which he presented. They proposed that they build a shared parking lot on the Board's property on Kipp Street. They could build a

lot that would add 60 to 90 spaces. The Community Center is an event driven venue. The agreement would have to favor the Community Center use so the parking was available when it was needed. The Board's use would be secondary. Their use would be for the students assigned to the lot in their lottery. The lot that the Borough proposed would be convenient for the Community Center and for Sasso Field events, but it is too far for the students. He concluded that they have been looking at the land behind the tennis courts which is owned by the Borough, but they feel a better solution is to build one lot and share it. A shared services agreement would be required.

Mr. Mancinelli clarified that he was referring to the area of the temporary parking lot as well as the rest of the property the Board owns. They did not use all of the property for the temporary lot. They could share a bigger lot.

Mayor Weinstein wondered how the residents would be protected. Mr. Mancinelli indicated that they would have to do whatever is necessary. They would have to put permanent screen in to protect the neighbors. Some drainage work is required. They would want to create a very presentable facility in the residential neighborhood.

Mayor Weinstein wondered if there was a problem with the bleachers being on one side. Superintendent Watson stated that there are other High School districts that have the bleachers that way. Mr. Mancinelli indicated that the Board of Education was considering demolishing those bleachers and rebuilding them in their five year capital program. He felt the fiscal burden for building a shared lot has to be less than each of them building their own lot. Work on Sasso field is not a top priority so they would have to change the Board's priority if the lot was to be built by the Borough.

Deputy Mayor Tedeschi wondered if the trees are in the 50 feet right-of-way. Mr. Mancinelli indicated they were and that they use the trees to rest and cool off. They are mature trees. The second plan takes down all of the trees.

Mr. Gillesen stated that if the Mayor and Council decide to use the property, the Board would have no recourse. There are obvious benefits for the Borough but there are far fewer benefits for the Board. The residents who live near the parking lot were instrumental in having that temporary lot removed. They wanted it restored to green. He did not see how this discussion and the possibilities on the table benefited the Board. There will be more parking for the students even though the residents do not believe they need the parking.

Mayor Weinstein stated that the goal is to get the input from the Board and to understand the impact on the Board.

Mr. Mancinelli stated that the spirit of the proposal is the realization that both entities are under financial restraints. They can share this parking lot. The Board believes that there is a parking problem for the students. The benefit for the Board was putting the students in a lot they control and getting 68 to 80 of them off the street. They would no longer be bothering the residents. The Borough needs a viable parking lot within a reasonable

distance from the Community Center. The shard parking lot they are proposing is one block from High School and a little more than a block from the Community Center. He believes that they can build 50 to 60 spaces and the Borough will have solved the parking issues.

Michael Rosenberg stated it is difficult to start talking about parking on Kipp Street. He thought if the Borough builds the lot with the exit on Bellair there will be a public outcry against it. The Kipp Street property could be buffered to resolve some of the issues of the temporary parking lot.

Mr. Mancinelli stated when they removed the temporary parking lot, they began looking for other areas for a parking lot that would not be intrusive to the neighborhood. The piece of property behind the tennis courts has issues because it does border on backyards. The ad hoc committee looked at all possible locations for parking lots and it seems that a shared lot would be more fiscally responsible.

Mayor Weinstein stated that the Community Center is congested Friday and Saturday. Option 2 would help the circulation. Mr. Mancinelli stated that although the Borough would solve their problems, the Board would have to give the Borough a 30 by 90 foot strip which would make it almost impossible to recreate the playing field. The Board would be in even worse shape.

Councilmember Baratta wondered how many spots they could get without encroaching on their property or the field. Manager Metzler indicated they would gain 63 spots.

Ms. Frankel stated that the trees become a very important factor in using the fields and she would not support cutting down the trees to build a parking lot. She noted that picking up and dropping off children at the Community Center has been the same for many, many years. They got rid of the temporary parking lot at the Council's suggestion but the time has come to look at that issue again.

Mayor Weinstein noted that things continue to change. They are here because of the success of the Community Center. Mr. Mancinelli indicated that they agree that the deficiency exists and they want to help find a way to resolve the problem. He explained the parking situation at the High School. They would use the additional parking on Kipp Street to recover the student parking that was lost when they expanded the High School. Ms. Frankel added that there are rules that they students have to follow to obtain a parking space. They created a grid because if a student lives two blocks from the High School, they should not be driving. More and more streets have restricted parking. Mr. Mancinelli stated that a parking spot for a student is a privilege. The Board has no control over the parking on the streets.

Deputy Mayor Swain noted that it is not so bad to park further away.

Mr. Banta indicated that 450 spaced are needed but that will never happen. Their concern is that something is going to be built. They want it to be built in the best place. Option 1 does not help the flow of traffic, but option 2 makes it very difficult for the Board.

Mr. Rosenberg stated if they build a parking lot on their land, it will take the field away. Two lacrosse games are played at the same time. People will complain if anything gets built on Kipp Street. It is green land but it is in a perfect spot for a parking lot that will help the Board and the Council.

Mayor Weinstein recommended that the Council create an ad hoc committee to look at the options and then meet with the Board again. Mr. Banta suggested that the two committees make a site visit together.

Deputy Mayor Tedeschi wondered if a parking lot was the best use of the property. Mr. Mancinelli felt that since the deed says the Board cannot use the property without the approval of the Council, perhaps the best option would be to subdivide it, sell it and build houses on it to create a ratable. It would not solve the parking problems. He concluded that this item should be moved to the shared services committee.

Ms. Wallace expressed concern that if proposal 1 and 2 move forward, it will cost the Board a great deal of money.

Mr. Rosenberg stated that right now they do not have a parking problem. The students are parking where they can and the complaints have lessened. They are trying to help the Borough solve their problem. Mr. Mancinelli pointed out that they have been working on the parking problems for years and it has calmed down. Mayor Weinstein felt they were all trying to be proactive.

Councilmember Baratta thanked the committee for the thoughts and efforts that went into the report. It appears that what will help the Borough will cause them problems and expense. She did not want to go forward with the plan as it is. They need to explore other avenues.

Deputy Mayor Tedeschi stated that any plan has to be the result of a consensus. The plan has to work together. It has to be mutually beneficial.

Ms. Wallace felt the joint committee should look at the property and look at all the pros and cons.

Councilmember Trawinski arrived at 8:30 p.m.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

Jim Rose, 17-12 Bellair stated that the property is valuable so it may not be wise to put a parking lot there but on the other hand they would have to spend a great deal of money for the other proposal.

Sonia Eligur, 7-15 Burke Place had a problem with the entryway they are planning which would be right next to her driveway. She thought everyone would make u-turns. It is a dangerous road now.

Harvey Rubinstein, 28 Rutgers Terrace did not think the plan was safe. On Friday nights the children are dropped off and picked up so there is no parking problem. The parking problem arises when there are events at the Cultural Center. He reiterated that they need to put in sidewalks. He thought people were finding a place to park so he did not understand where there is a problem. He concluded that it would be dangerous to have cars coming out onto Bellair.

Anise Palomba, 16-14 Bellair Avenue stated that the bend in the road is treacherous. Speeding is a serious problem. He objected to putting an entrance on Burke and Bellair. He stated that there is never a police presence on the street.

Sheri Rose, 17-12 Bellair Avenue thought they should leave well enough alone. There is a traffic problem already. Parking is now allowed on both sides of Bellair Avenue which makes it difficult to get out of her driveway. She has called the police asking for a police car to patrol once a month but she has not seen that happen.

Mark Canevaro, 7-06 Burke Place, a new resident suggested they send an unmarked car to patrol the street.

Deborah Batelli, 16-10 Bellair Avenue stated that the first priority has to be safety and the well being of the residents. The students speed and it is a dangerous curve.

ADJOURNMENT:

Upon motion by Councilmember Baratta and second by Deputy Mayor Swain, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne M. Kwasniewski, RMC/CMC/MMC
Municipal Clerk

The undersigned have read and approve the foregoing minutes.

Mayor Steven Weinstein

Councilmember Jeanne Baratta

Deputy Mayor Lisa Swain

Deputy Mayor Joseph Tedeschi

Councilmember Ed Trawinski