

METUCHEN PARKING AUTHORITY
SPECIAL MEETING FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON A PROPOSAL TO CREATE
LONG TERM PARKING AT 52 INN PLACE
DECEMBER 8, 2015 MINUTES

Notice of this meeting was given by providing the location, time and date of the meeting by posting same on the bulletin board in Borough hall, delivering copies to the Home News Tribune, and filing a copy with the Metuchen Borough Clerk.

A quorum of the Authority commissioners included Chairman Roseman, Commissioner John DeFoe and Commissioner Sean Massey at the commencement of the meeting. Commissioner Rick Dyas also attended as well as Councilman Jay Muldoon.

Mr. Roseman opened the meeting introducing Thomas Herits, engineer. Mr. Herits passed out a drawing showing parking spaces as one possible layout. He said that he was about to begin a design of the parking lot at 52 Inn Place. Attendees then had an opportunity to discuss the intended improvement without time limit and a lengthy back and forth discussion ensued.

Jeff Petersen, residing at 32 Hillside Avenue said his primary concern is congestion. This emergency responder complained that existing traffic delays his response time. His calls concern life and death matters. He then expressed his concern for drainage anticipating that more impervious surface on a new parking lot could put water in their basements. He also complained about lighting from the new lot may destroy the value of homes adjacent to the lot. He felt that games had been played with development proposals in his neighborhood. It appears to him that the proposed parking lot would only benefit individuals who are planning rental units in the area.

Mr. Roseman responded by asking Mr. Herits about drainage. Mr. Herits said that drainage would be addressed and the direction and shielding would minimize lighting issues. The presence of a day care facility, the resulting traffic plus cars cutting through from Grove to Main Street add to congestion.

Tom McKiernan, 36 Highland Avenue, complained about the Authority plan changing. Mr. Roseman responded that Inn Place parking was intended to support development in the downtown.

Ms. Evelyn Grant stated that protecting the residential districts was key to the city plan. A parking lot would be a non-conforming use that would create activity 24/7 rather than the present 9 to 5 at the Global Insurance lot.

David Aitken, residing at 24 Highland complained that Mr. Frizell's planned development was not providing sufficient parking and questioned whether the Authority was only assisting Global and Frizell rather than the community. He questioned the business case and the costs and return to create 20 spaces at Inn Place.

Mr. Roseman said that the capital costs would be recovered within 5 years. He said that the concept was for 60 not 20 spaces. Commissioner DeFoe added that shared parking with residential and commuter use would maximize the valuable resource of downtown parking. He also noted the cost of creating a space in the Pearl Street deck was about \$15,000.

Ms. Diaz of Upland Avenue expressed her concern in finding parking for lunch hour. Mr. Roseman noted this lot would not be intended for short term parking. He also noted the Authority has supported the Borough and helped reduce real estate taxes in Metuchen by contributing \$700,000 annually. Taxpayers do not subsidize the Authority.

Another attendee asked about policy regarding this plan. He thought the plan was for less surface parking.

Using the lot for a park was recommended, receiving applause from the audience.

Mr. Roseman indicated the policy of the Borough Council was for the Authority to support the development of downtown. Mr. DeFoe noted that finding parking for lunch in Metuchen could be improved with signage.

Commissioner Sean Massey followed that saying signage and wayfinding were a big part of the Nelson-Nygaard parking management plan which also concluded that additional parking capacity was not needed.

Mrs. Del Rosario said remaining in Metuchen is a question for her because of this planned lot. She was concerned with real estate values, privacy and security noting a recent auto break-in.

Mr. McKeirnan of 36 Highland emphasized the issues of traffic, lighting and providing parking for Mr. Frizell.

Jeff Petersen urged the creation of a park noting the precedent of the Authority providing land for the Senior Center.

Mr. Herits had to leave before the conclusion of the meeting with Mr. Roseman inviting final questions of the engineer.

Mr. Aitken of 24 Highland Avenue questioned preservation of some of the trees on the lot. A pin oak there is a specimen tree and other trees were worth preserving. The surface of Global's lot is now partially pervious and would become a heat sink. He asked about buffering, landscaping, fence height, set-backs, limit on impervious surface and keeping the residential spirit of the neighborhood.

Tim Kelly of 64 Pleasant Place asked if cars in both directions could pass on Inn Place. The right of way was said to be 25 feet which is only half of the normal Metuchen right of way.

Tom McKiernan asked about accommodating fire trucks, garbage trucks and placement of residential trash receptacles.

Mrs. Grant emphasized Inn Place is a cul-de-sac and expected traffic congestion and lighting to be a problem. She also complained that her residential neighborhood would be used for more parking. She said Global was a non-conforming use.

David Aitken said providing 20 additional spaces for the town does not make sense and helping Mr. Frizell and Global is a poor use of public funds.

In response to a complaint about the “business case” for this lot, Mr. Roseman cited projected expense of \$200,000 to be recovered within 5 years to provide 60 spaces. Mr. DeFoe emphasized shared parking with commuters and residents using the same space at different times.

Ms. Craft of Highland Avenue asked what the proposed lot will do to property values.

The height of lighting on the lot was questioned. Mr. Herits said he had not made any determination of lighting but that shielding could minimize spillage into adjacent properties.

Discussion turned to Pearl development and the impact of residents in 273 new apartments on traffic. Mr. Roseman responded that those residents will replace out of town commuters and not increase congestion.

Evelyn Grant asserted sticking a parking lot in a residential district was less desirable than putting a parking deck on the Halsey lot property. She continued only 6 families complained about that proposal which was dropped.

Mr. Roseman said it would be presumptive to state any conclusion about the proposed development and that tonight’s public response would be considered.

A complaint about more rental units in this neighborhood was made.

Mr. Roseman recognized the meeting had brought the concerns of the public to the Authority. The next regular meeting of the Authority is December 15th.

Commissioner Massey thanked the public for coming out and said he favored a public park or playground at this location.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/Thomas Crownover