

**Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for June 10, 2019
Needham Town Hall
Powers Hall**

7:00 p.m.

Call to Order:

A meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair John A. Bulian. Those present were Maurice P. Handel, Matthew D. Borrelli, Marianne B. Cooley, Daniel P. Matthews, Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick, and Recording Secretary Mary Hunt.

Mr. Bulian welcomed attendees to the Transportation Summit. He said the Select Board organized the summit to hear thoughts, concerns, and questions from the public about the state of transportation in Needham.

Ms. Fitzpatrick reported on the state of transportation in Needham commenting on the contemplated adoption of a long-term transportation plan by the Select Board outlining the Town's priorities. She noted projects of a certain size/nature could be considered under the state funding program, a process that could take 7-10 years or more.

Specifically, Ms. Fitzpatrick said the Town is in the process of selecting a consultant to help create the first phase of the complete streets program. She also commented on the expected completion of the pedestrian safety audit which will include recommendations for improvements around schools and in the business districts. She spoke about the 5-year phased streetscape plan and the use of state funding, saying the start of the second phase of construction is planned for 2020. Ms. Fitzpatrick said the Commonwealth approved the Highland Avenue corridor project with work expected to begin in the spring 2020. Ms. Fitzpatrick commented on the reconstruction of the intersection at 3rd Avenue at Kendrick Street, as well as future evaluation of signal changes at 4th Avenue at Kendrick Street. She noted the roads and bridges program and total spending of over \$34 million since 2005. Ms. Fitzpatrick spoke about the Healthy Aging Report emphasizing local transportation for seniors and other residents, and that the Town continues talking with the City of Newton on shared interests and the desire for "last mile" transportation from the commuter line. Ms. Fitzpatrick concluded with comments on the use of e-bikes, future use of autonomous vehicles, ride share programs, and that the Town continues talks with the MBTA on many issues including idling, station repair, on-time performance, scheduling, and bus routes.

Mr. Bulian invited comments from various board and committee members.

David Montgomery, 361 Webster Street, Chair Transportation Committee said his committee has focused on commuter rail service for many years. More recently,

he said the committee acknowledged commuter rail service is not the only mode of transportation, stating the committee would like to work with the Select Board on transportation related priorities. He said focus has been on reexamining existing and new bus service routes, as well as private/public partnership shuttle bus service for employees working in Needham.

Steve Delisi, 54 Elmwood Road, Chair, Traffic Management Advisory Committee (TMAC) said his committee deals mostly with safety issues, including crosswalks and signals, as well as complaints regarding speeding on residential streets.

Adam Block, 848 Central Avenue, Chair, Council of Economic Advisors commented his committee considers how businesses move employees around town through major arteries or by public transportation. He said improving the ability of customers to park and access small businesses is also a consideration. He said he is interested in understanding and helping with the implementation of suggestions.

Colleen Schaller, Chair, Council on Aging said the primary concern is moving the elderly population, saying at the moment the COA is “overloaded” with transportation requests to appointments of all sorts. She said public transportation of any kind would be extremely helpful.

Stephane Grably, Transportation Coordinator, Council on Aging said transportation requests are increasing approximately 10%-15% per year, commenting 11,121 ride requests are projected this year. He said it was surprising to him, when he was without a car for a couple of days, just how difficult it was to get places. He said people should understand what seniors experience when they are without a car. Mr. Grably said the Town not only provides rides, but a lifeline for seniors to get to appointments or to get prescriptions.

Justin McCullen, 22 Miller Street, member of the Transportation Committee, TMAC, and Emergency Planning Committee said it is important to consider a holistic plan regarding growth and how the Town deals with parking and modality.

Sandy Robinson, Community Council commented the mission of the Council is to fulfill under met needs of residents, including transportation. She said when the number of volunteer drivers diminished over the years, a partnership formed with Lyft, supported by the Council and the hospital. She said she is hopeful another van partnership is found and concluded the Community Council wants to be part of the conversation and part of the solution.

Mr. Bulian invited public comment.

Elizabeth Kaponya, 27 Highland Terrace said there are many needs to be met. She commented on the Northland project, a huge development with apartments, commercial, and business space. Ms. Kaponya suggested Needham Street will have much more traffic due to construction. She commented large businesses coming to Needham are usually required to provide mitigation, however her neighborhood has never seen any mitigation, except for the planting of a few trees. Ms. Kaponya suggested part of mitigation could include transportation to alleviate some of the traffic issues, perhaps collaborating with companies to “act quickly.” She acknowledged Lyft and Uber are nice options, but cars add to traffic problems. Ms. Kaponya said frequent, less expensive shuttle service is needed.

Gershon Gacs, 79 Pleasant Street said he rides his bicycle to Boston, but many people do not feel safe riding on the streets. He said the complete streets initiative is a great step. He commented steps can be taken to become a designated bicycle friendly community.

Greg Reibman, Newton Needham Regional Chamber of Commerce said revenue is needed to fix state wide issues. He commented many of the local steps noted by Ms. Fitzpatrick make sense. He suggested reading the Governor’s report and that the issue must be considered regionally, not just locally. Mr. Reibman commented on greenhouse gas, multimodal transportation, autonomous cars, rezoning of Muzi Ford property, and shuttle discussions being included in the Northland proposal.

Tom Francis, 124 Highgate Street said he rides his bike into Boston most days and it takes about the same amount of time as the train. He said his commute is more flexible. Mr. Francis said he does not fear riding the streets of Boston, however, riding the streets of Needham is the scariest part of his trip, particularly on Kendrick Street and Highland Street at rush hour. He suggested changes to improve safety.

Jackie DeWolfe, 242 Dedham Avenue said she hopes issues on transportation are always considered in a multimodal way, not pitting one mode against another. She commented she works for the Transportation Secretary for the state of Massachusetts. Ms. DeWolfe gave transportation statistics, noting most trips are less than 3 miles. She said she doesn’t want to have to think twice about safety before sending her child off to school on a bicycle in the coming years.

Mr. Bulian asked for comments from the Board.

Mr. Borrelli said mitigation sticks out in his mind, and a “hard look” must be taken. He said a shuttle service for seniors would affect the most people and could be feasible in the short term. Mr. Borrelli commented mitigation, thinking globally, and addressing senior population is a good start.

Mr. Handel said there are four aspects to the issue including travel from, to, within, and through Needham. He said the Town must consider what it can control, e.g. smaller shared shuttle service that meets the needs of many. He commented it may be good to inventory and coordinate resources among shuttle services. Mr. Handel said the issue is regional.

Mr. Matthews said the issue is complicated with many moving parts and differing needs. He commented people look to government to guide the process, and that most people generally do not want to pay more taxes. Mr. Matthews said hearing the initiatives from the Town Manager has been helpful and is a lot to think about.

Ms. Cooley said she is interested in seeing results of the complete streets study, and possible consideration of making some streets one-way to create a better system for all modes of transportation. She commented she supports the “last mile” and shuttle ideas. Of note, Ms. Cooley mentioned an idea introduced by Robin Chase who recommended parking garages be built with flat floors, so that they can be turned into housing when no longer needed. Ms. Cooley said the Town needs to be careful with what is put in place while trying to solve the problem.

Mr. Bulian commented moving people around and through town is a consistent theme. He said using WAZE creates traffic in neighborhoods that previously did not have traffic. Mr. Bulian reiterated a public/private shuttle system is an excellent idea. He noted the growing senior population, and the loss of freedom when seniors give up their vehicles. He said the Select Board have lamented on the transportation system of the Commonwealth over the years, particularly as the Board has moved to increase population through its own actions of approving large scale apartment complexes. Mr. Bulian said a shuttle system and improving streets to accommodate cars, pedestrians, and bicyclists is needed. He noted safety is most important, commenting on distracted drivers.

Mr. Bulian thanked attendees for their input.

7:50 p.m.

Adjourn:

Motion by Mr. Borrelli that the Select Board vote to adjourn the Select Board meeting of Monday, June 10, 2019.

Second: Ms. Cooley. Unanimously approved 5-0.