

To the Board of Selectmen and the FinCom:

October 31, 2012

The School Committee motion of May 22 that prohibited building a new transportation facility on the Regional High School property has been mentioned both in a FinCom meeting and in a School Committee meeting during this past week, so I am including both on this copy list.

Attached is an analysis of the logical problems with that motion, expressed as comments added to a copy of the letter that the two School Committees sent to the Board of Selectmen on June 22.

There is a simple process by which an unsuitable motion can be reversed. The School Committee itself used that process during their meeting on April 23, 2012 to reconsider an earlier motion regarding rental of the bus maintenance property in Billerica. It took three steps, but the undesired earlier motion was reversed. As I recall, the steps included a temporary suspension of the rules, the reversal of the earlier motion, and finally the substitution of a corrected or alternative motion.

If we eliminate the restrictive motion of May 22, we will save about \$1 million, compared with any other option for constructing new transportation buildings.

I have shown that the present transportation buildings are not close to the new high school, and that the planned ring road can be changed in a simple and inexpensive way to be clear of them. (The plan was published in the Concord Journal on page A10 of the August 23 issue as a Guest Commentary.)

The new school can be placed exactly where the Building Committee decided to put it, without any alteration. On August 24 I provided full details of the vertical sections of the grading needed to build the corrected road design, to both Stan Durlacher and Brian Dakin (of KVA) on the Committee, and to Maureen Kirkpatrick (of Turner), but the subsequent "evaluation" conducted by OMR for the September 12, 2012 Committee meeting did not include the design I had carefully described to them.

What OMR actually evaluated was five much more expensive and fanciful designs of their own, in which they missed the point. (My analysis of the OMR study, a "Citizen's Report Card", that I submitted to the MSBA on September 15, was included with that email as a copy to you. I will be happy to provide another copy if it is needed.)

A bus parking lot is not a part of my design plan, because during the construction work the buses must be parked elsewhere, and after construction there must be a parking lot for them somewhere, included in every option. The buses can be parked over the Town landfill, or later can be parked over the remediated School landfill.

I reviewed my simpler design with two qualified engineers who did understand it, one of them a licensed landscape architect living in Concord. We believe my plan can be implemented for an added cost of less than \$200,000. That is about \$1 million cheaper than reconstructing the buildings anywhere else, even anywhere on the Regional property. Stan Durlacher and I plan to meet for an overdue discussion of how my plan can achieve that saving.

William T. Plummer
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Concord

[Comments Added 10/30/12 to Correct Errors in the Original Letter]

~~6/22/12~~

To: Carmin Reiss, Chair, Concord Board of Selectmen
Fr: Maureen Spada and Fabian Fondriest, Chairs, CPS and CCRSD
Re: School Committee decision to restrict CCHS land from consideration as a transportation depot.

Carmin,

On May 22, 2012 the School Committees voted unanimously to restrict Concord Carlisle High School land from consideration as a permanent transportation facility. Key reasons for that decision are outlined below. **[The comments inserted in Bold explain why that vote was not appropriate, because it was not based on facts in the way the School Committee Handbook requires.]**

- We are working hard to reduce the amount of impermeable surfaces (roofs, roads, and walks) from the current percentage of above 20% to the allowable percentage of 15%. Adding additional buildings and paving for a bus depot puts us far out of compliance on the high school land.

The existing transportation facility is present on the site now and has been for many years, so it would be grandfathered under this new requirement. I have shown that we can keep those buildings in place without interference with the new school buildings. The present bus parking lot will be greatly reduced in area. When the old landfill is remediated there will be an impermeable area larger than the present student parking lot, and easily large enough to hold more than double the entire present transportation facility.

- From an environmental planning point of view, the high school sits in a water conservancy district because of its' proximity to the town well. We do not consider it responsible to rebuild a new transportation depot in the water conservancy district.

There is no need to build a new transportation facility, as we already have one, and it is not near the town well or any of the wetland areas of the site. The Citizens' Transportation Committee ranks this option highest.

- We estimate that 1.5-2 acres would be needed to replace the existing transportation depot. While the high school property is large, much of the land is currently in use for soccer, track, football, lacrosse, field hockey, Town youth athletic teams, and many other sports. One need only to drive by the campus at 2:30 p.m. during spring and fall sports seasons to see hundreds of students using those fields each afternoon. We consider it unacceptable to consider removing athletic fields that are heavily used, and replace them with a transportation depot.

The present transportation facility can be kept with no disruption of any athletic fields. By contrast, the current building plan already includes destruction of the tennis courts and the JV athletic field, without a plan for replacements.

- The other side of the campus, near the student parking lot, closely abuts Bristers Hill Road. We have heard strong concerns from Bristers Hill Road residents about parking buses at that corner of the property. In fact, our plan to house the buses temporarily on the Sanborn property is directly in response to those concerns.

This argument does not apply to the present transportation buildings. Some or all of the buses can be parked in the area of the present student parking lot, soon to become a remediated “brown field” site for which that use is appropriate. Or the principal bus parking area can be elsewhere, as at the newer landfill site across Route 2.

- Land on the high school campus is reserved for: possible long-term expansion of the high school, to replace existing athletic facilities disrupted by the construction project, or to expand our current athletic fields.

Land on the high school campus cannot be used for “long-term expansion of the high school” because of the limitation on impermeable surface area, clearly stated above by the CCRSC. The surface over the old landfill will necessarily be impermeable when it is remediated, is not appropriate for replacement of the destroyed athletic fields nor for expanding the current ones, but will be excellent for parking buses.

- The CCRSD includes stakeholders in both Concord and Carlisle. While Concord is involved in research to seek alternative plans to replace the depot, the Carlisle Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee have clearly stated their lack of interest in engaging in a capital project for these facilities.

Contrary to the failed OMR design efforts in September, no extra capital is needed for keeping the present buildings, and any paving needed for parking can be provided as part of the necessary landfill remediation at and adjacent to the existing student parking lot. Carlisle has made only minimal contributions to the cost of the existing facilities, but we are all still paying for them.

- With the School Administration, the School Committees, the Transportation Advisory Committee, and the Citizens Transportation Committee all working to resolve the issue of long term student transportation, we are confident that acceptable solutions do exist without the risk, complications, and untenable compromises that would be needed to house transportation on the high school campus.

Because the existing transportation buildings are nearly 60 yards from the nearest part of the new school, those buildings are not in the way and do not need to be removed. A specific plan for working around them was published in the Concord Journal on August 23, page A10, and additional vertical section details were provided to the Building Committee on August 24. Repeated statements that the buildings “have to be removed” are not justified by fact. Therefore there are no “risks, complications, or untenable compromises” needed to keep the buildings exactly where they are. There will be an excellent parking area for buses when the old landfill is remediated. The Citizens’ Transportation Committee has recommended that the transportation facility should be kept, long term, where it now is.

Should you have further questions about this decision please feel free to contact us.

~~Thank You,
Fabian Fondriest and Maureen Spada~~

William T. Plummer