

By Email:

To the Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee, and to the Concord committees that supported their motion under Article 14 at the April, 2016, Town Meeting:

Article 14 was, *"To determine whether the Town will vote to approve \$1,100,000, or any other sum, of debt authorized by the Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee for landfill remediation; provided, however, that this approval shall be contingent upon passage of a Proposition 2 1/2 debt exclusion referendum under General Laws Chapter 59, §21C(k), to exempt the Town's allocable share of the amounts required for payment of interest and principal on said borrowing or take any other action relative thereto."*

The motion was defeated. The subsequent referendum to fund the proposal was defeated ten days later by a ratio of 3 to 2.

But the defeat was not about the landfill remediation: we all know that will be necessary. The defeat was not about the money: we passed more expensive motions under other Articles.

The defeat happened because the proposed action was not the best for the community.

For the past five years the School Administration has made one effort after another to hide or get rid of our school bus operation. We have heard a succession of excuses for doing so. Whatever the actual motivation, these efforts have cost our citizens a lot of money, and have been resisted repeatedly in Town Meetings. We could have retained our original Transportation Facility at the high school for less than \$500,000, perhaps a lot less. But the Facility was destroyed a little earlier than necessary, and just days before a scheduled Town Meeting vote to preserve it.

Even the Building Committee admitted the Facility could have been retained for about \$2.1 million. But we are now investing more than \$4 million to replace it at Knox Trail, and are facing continuing excess operational costs because of the "empty" bus mile to and from that distant location.

Concord citizens have been unable to influence removal of the Transportation Facility. But we have a chance to influence the ongoing operational costs, pointed up in the successful motion under Article 16 at our Town Meeting. We can greatly reduce those costs by providing a bus parking lot when we remediate closed dump by the old high school. The attached pages comprise a specific proposal for doing so in a way that will not increase our tax expense while we are paying for it, and will save us millions of dollars in the future.

Let's explore this option, and work out the details of it in public hearings, rather than in three-minute comments and an occasional letter in the newspaper. We don't want to have a remediation plan defeated again in our Town Meeting.

## The Dump Remediation Issue

An important motion was defeated in our April 4 Concord Town Meeting, remediation of an old dump under Article 14. It was defeated again by about 3/2 in the funding referendum that followed on April 14. But we will have to remediate that dump by February 8, 2018, to avoid heavy DEP penalties. What went wrong?

One clue was the easy passage of Article 16, to reconsider keeping the bus operations at Knox Trail, far away from the high school grounds. Mark Hanson showed in detail that although Knox Trail is about half as far away as the temporary parking lot we have been using in Acton, it will still require a lot of “empty miles” of bus driving to and from the Knox Trail maintenance structure authorized under Article 15 and funded on April 14.

The School Committee motion, just to bury the old dump under a couple of feet of dirt, was based on its apparently cheaper design, considering only the remediation cost and ignoring future bus operating costs. We have been paying an extra \$450,000 or so each year to maintain and park our buses far away. If we subtract about \$100,000 for leasing the Acton parking lot and a distant maintenance building, the present empty miles themselves cost about \$350,000. The Knox Trail site is about half as far away as the Acton lot, so we can cut that amount in half, giving \$175,000 we will still be paying each year for empty bus miles. That includes driver time, fuel, and wearing out an extra half bus each year. Mark has calculated that this extra operational cost will add up to about \$6,856,104 over the expected life of our new school. When the failed motion under Article 14 was discussed, the School Committee was asked to “go back to the drawing board” primarily because of this enormous hidden cost to the community.

Is there some kind of compromise available? Yes. A bus doesn't need to go back to the maintenance building at Knox Trail every day, certainly not two or more times each day, but maybe once each week on the average. If we can find a more central place to park the buses during the day and overnight, we can save about 80% of that empty mile cost, or about \$140,000 every year. Forever.

Two committees looked at and rejected just about every square foot of Concord before we decided that the buses had to be parked at Knox Trail. Although the Citizens' Transportation Committee made the remediation site their *first* choice, the Transportation Advisory Committee wasn't allowed to agree with them. There are more options we haven't properly considered. One possibility is at the east end of the recently capped Town landfill across Route 2. A different place on that landfill was considered and rejected by Town Meeting because of imagined problems with the Walden Pond ecology. But the east end is farther from Walden Pond than the State's own parking lots, and can be considered again someday. Another attractive site is at the southwest corner of the high school grounds, right where Route 2 crosses the railroad tracks. That would be a fine place to park the buses at least the four days every week. There is already an access road for the site because it is adjacent to the parking lot by the upper turf fields.

The topic at hand, however, is the required remediation of the old dump by the side of the demolished high school, so we will consider it again at a Town Meeting. When we remediate the old dump we will have at least 3.6 acres of impervious surface, and can perfectly well use part of it for parking the buses. The next few pages offer a specific plan for implementing the parking we need, on just 0.8 acre of the remediated area, and are followed by a discussion of some concerns that have been raised.

From the CONCORD JOURNAL, June 2, 2016, page A6

### **Carlisle got it wrong**

Carlisle got it wrong when they voted to approve just capping the CCHS landfill. Mr. Cancio's letter last week also got it wrong. Nobody proposes "just paving over" the old landfill on the High School grounds. The DEP will accept a solution that includes paving part of the old parking lot.

We don't need to "dig out the landfill for millions more", but only to scrape off some old paving. According to School Committee consultant CDW's presentation last week, we need to remediate 3.6 acres. Their estimate for repaving all 2.6 acres of the old parking lots is \$2,578,323, but we *need only about 0.8 acre* to hold all our buses, plus a great many junior-driven cars. That extra amount is only \$460,000, or about \$133,000 a year on a four-year bond payment.

With reduced bus operating costs, as much as \$140,000 each year, and parking fees from juniors, we project that there will be A TAX SAVING during our payments for remediation. After that, CCHS will have enough saved operating money to hire one more teacher; forever!

"Erase an opportunity to reduce the impermeable surface area"? No, because *all 3.6 remediated acres must be impervious*.

Diesel fumes? By policy a bus can't idle on the campus for more than five minutes. Most "fumes and noise" are emitted when the buses deliver and pick up students. The better "green" solution is to reduce all the unnecessary "empty" bus miles between our distant Knox Trail site and the middle of town. Any fumes and particulates at Mr. Cancio's nearby home on Bristers Hill Road mostly come by Southwest prevailing winds from Route 2, not from the high school grounds.

The school committee has been asked to hold public hearings on the topic before wasting this opportunity to save us tax money.

William Plummer  
Arena Terrace





122 ft

Google earth





**FIGURE 2**

PROPOSED CAP BOUNDARY  
CONCORD CARLISLE HIGH SCHOOL  
CONCORD, MA

June 2015

CDW

0001/02 521802F 63063 505F 2001-02-01-0775





# Costs: Landscape vs. Parking Lot

BASELINE: Soil Cap w/ Impervious Clay Liner, Loam & Seed (passive recreation)		ALT 1: Car Parking Lot, full depth replace existing + drainage structures	
ITEM - Description	COST		COST
MOBILIZATION	\$8,000		\$8,000
DEMOLITION & PREP	\$31,350		\$118,100
SITE WORK/DRAINAGE FOR IMPROVEMENTS	\$0		\$59,100
EXCAVATE & DISPOSE OF CONTAMINATED SOILS	\$0		\$1,095,000
NEW CAP CONSTRUCTION	\$772,950		\$637,115
SKATE PARK IMPROVEMENTS	\$44,120		\$35,960
BASELINE COSTS		ALT 1	\$1,953,275
with added 15% contingency	\$984,883	w/ Added 20%	\$2,343,930 *
Engineering Obser/Owners Rep (10%)	\$98,488		\$234,393
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,083,371</b>		<b>\$2,578,323</b>
*20% contingency due to soil management cost uncertainty			

## More Discussion

Other issues didn't fit in my Letter to the Concord Journal. Can we put a new bus parking lot somewhere at or near the high school, but not on the remediated site? I would be pleased to have the buses at that southwest corner location, or maybe even right across Route 2, but to secure my vote for just burying the old dump, the School Committee will first have to commit to building a parking lot in one of those places instead.

That little red rectangle can be elongated toward the south to accommodate more cars. There are now fewer parking opportunities for juniors who have licenses. We have been told that no parking spaces were lost with the new school construction, but we know that juniors now have a parking problem. In a vigorous twenty-minute presentation to the Carlisle Board of Selectmen on April 26, two members of our Building Committee pressed hard for support of the Carlisle version of our Article 14 at their Town Meeting, but admitted that juniors used to park in a number of places by the old high school that are no longer permitted.

A larger parking lot may cost more, but it will pay for itself. If we increase the area by 25%, to just 1.0 acre, we can add another 32 car spaces. If 32 more students each pay \$700 a year, that's \$22,400, and will cover 2/3 of the added cost during our bond service payments. After the bonds mature the money will be school profit every year, a terrific investment, giving back nearly a million dollars over the next forty years. That calculation can be considered properly in a public hearing. Even better, the CDW price already includes a fat 20% contingency to cover any unexpected soil issues. If the soils are no worse than expected we can pave some extra area within the same budget.

The little red rectangle can be moved around a bit on the site, and can be drawn with different proportions for optimum parking efficiency, pretty much anywhere within the 2.6 acres of the old student lots.

Currently an Advisory Committee is considering how to change the high school schedule to start later in the morning, in line with similar actions across the country to improve both health and learning. That effort can only be helped if we have our buses more readily available as they are needed during the day.

A question has been raised about costs for lights and fencing for the bus parking lot. I note that Acton and Sudbury do NOT provide lights and fencing, so the lights and fencing may be optional. The outsource contractors that were previously discussed did not provide secure parking at night, nor even a lot of any kind. We will probably want electricity for engine block heaters on cold mornings.

During the Joint School Committee meeting on May 24, John Flaherty suggested a reasonable schedule for the whole project. Working backward, our deadline for the remediation is February 8, 2018. We don't want to do the work under deep snow, so want to be finished well before then. The companies that supply asphalt charge a little extra about November, when the weather gets colder. We probably want to do the job even before school opens in the fall, so we should accomplish it in July or August 2017.

The remediation work will only take a few weeks. John believes that there will be time for permits if the project is approved by our regular Town Meeting next year. We have several months now, between June 2016 and April 2017, for the Joint School Committee to hold the much-needed public hearing or two, as has been requested, to regain proper support from the community and easy passage of a revised (or amended) Article 14. That motion should include at least a 0.8 acre parking area with its slightly higher apparent price. We have an opportunity here to save a lot of tax money and solve other problems as well, both in Concord and in Carlisle. Let's do the job right.