

# DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

---

## **MINUTES**

**May 22, 2019**

*(Approved 6/19/2019)*

### MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Kevin Coughlin, Chair  
Lisa Laprade, Vice-Chair  
Steve Bilafer  
Mayanne Briggs  
Joshua Donati  
Dr. Melissa Pearrow  
Tracey White

### MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT:

None

### MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Michael Welch, Superintendent  
Samuel Rippin, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance

Meeting Location: Dedham Middle School

Meeting commenced at 7:08 p.m.

### Traffic Circulation Community Input Meeting

On November 26, 2018 at the Fall Annual Town Meeting, Town Meeting Members voted to approve Article Eight, Appropriation for School Circulation Study. After going out to bid, the School Committee selected Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) a firm with many years of experience analyzing and solving challenging traffic/circulation issues.

VHB compiled a comprehensive Data Collection Work Plan and met multiple times with School Committee representatives to discuss the scope of their work. The first phase of data collection around the high school/middle school/Avery school complex and surrounding neighborhoods began on Wednesday, April 24.

Tonight's meeting will consist of a presentation from VHB (which is available on the district website) and discuss the concerns of neighbors, parents, and community members that are occurring around the Avery/DMS/DHS campus and surrounding areas in Dedham. The goal is to gather as much input from all potential stakeholders as possible so that VHB has the best information to arrive at the best recommendations for a comprehensive solution for the Dedham Public Schools and the Town of Dedham.

Mr. Coughlin thanked DPW Director Joe Flanagan, Police Chief Michael D'Entremont and Planning Board Member Jessica Porter for being in attendance.

Mr. Coughlin explained that tonight's meeting was to gather community input. He introduced Laura Castelli and Noah Yoskowitz from VHB. Ms. Castelli began the presentation.

The presentation included an overview of the project, spring data collection effort, initial thoughts on the high school, middle school, and Avery School, and a timeline with next steps.

The second community meeting will be in November or December.

The School Committee members commented.

Ms. White noted that many of the traffic issues include moving violations and inquired about more police presence in the area. She also asked about installing speed bumps or other traffic slowing measures. Mr. Coughlin explained all suggestions would be taken under advisement.

Dr. Pearrow questioned a statement by VHB regarding the organization of the middle school drop off and pick up and felt the process was not efficient and asked for it to be looked into further.

Mr. Bilafer asked if data collection is being done on days where the facilities are being rented. Ms. Castelli explained there are three data collection days planned. However, they can capture any day the Committee sees fit. Mr. Rippin stated he could have his assistant work with Ms. Castelli regarding this information.

Mr. Donati seconded Mr. Bilafer's inquiry into looking at the totality of the campus and its use.

Mr. Coughlin asked if the observers are counting walkers and bikers. Ms. Castelli said that information was being gathered by data collection and observers.

Supt. Welch asked what is meant by "poor intersection operation" Ms. Castelli explained it is a delay at an intersection exceeding 45 seconds. This has been associated with the volume at drop off and pick up times.

Supt. Welch inquired into what types of recommendations may be suggested by VHB. Ms. Castelli stated that some typical recommendations include signage, roadway striping, traffic signals, one way streets, raised crosswalks, 3D crosswalks, more staggered drop off and pick up times, and mini roundabouts or neighborhood traffic circles. VHB will help determine pros and cons of each option.

Mr. Coughlin opened the public comment portion of the meeting.

Lorraine LeClair, DPS Traffic Director at Maverick and High Street, has repeatedly asked for "Do Not Block Intersection" signage. She sees lots of backup at this intersection. She also feels speed and cell phone use are major issues effecting traffic.

Carol Donovan, DPS Traffic Director at Bussey and Colburn, requested handicap access at that intersection as well as "Children Crossing" signs. She also observed that cars don't stop for the busses.

Sandra Poch, DPS Substitute Traffic Director, feels that the construction around town is adding to the traffic problems. She also feels that the middle school has the worst outflow of traffic.

Linda Dineen, DPS Traffic Director at Mt. Vernon Street, explained there is no crosswalk at her post and that cars do not stop for crossing children. She noted the speed limit is posted at 30 MPH.

Steve Davey, 31 Lewis Lane, sees traffic issue as a town wide problem. He would like to see more encouragement around students walking and riding their bikes to school. He noted a program called "Safe Routes to Schools" and would like to see more discussion of alternative modes of transportation.

Sharna Borsellino, 55 Barrows Street, was disappointed that the traffic on Barrows Street was not included in the catchment area. She explained how Barrows Street is used as cut through and has become very dangerous. Ms. Castelli explained that although Barrows Street was not the in RFP the Field Observers did notice it is a problem and needs to be considered. Ms. Borsellino explained that immediately following school breaks seems to be the worse situations. The Committee agreed to take Ms. Borsellino's comments under advisement.

Pakita Bass, 164 Central Avenue, also feels that - for the health of students - encouraging walking and biking to school should be at the forefront of the issue. She asked if VHB had done a walk and bike analysis and whether the rail corridor was considered in the survey. Ms. Castenelli explained that an analysis of students capable of walking to school will be done in the fall and that the rail trail has not been observed.

Mark Whalen, 18 Elmview Place, agreed with the problems on Barrows Street and the lack of a crosswalk on Mt. Vernon. He expressed the issues of the parking on Elmview Place when events are taking place at the high school and at the pool. He stated he is a member of Livable Dedham and that members of that group are willing to help with data collection.

Maryann Molloy, 65 Whiting Avenue, asked VHB to please send a notice to abutters when data collection is occurring. She explained that the devices are loud and would like to be notified when they are going to be operational. She also explained her concern for the number of children being dropped off at the corner of Mt. Vernon and East Streets.

Jessica Porter, 4 Willow Street, noted that there is compelling data on the shift in traffic patterns and the relation to obesity. The number of students who get rides has risen. She would encourage data collection to include focus groups with parents and students to see why students walk to school. She also mentioned incentives like allowing students who walk to school be allowed to have an earlier dismissal time. She asked the Committee to think creatively.

Ms. Laprade noted she was also on the Livable Dedham Committee and would like to bring consultant Mark Fenton to a School Committee meeting.

Dr. Pearrow stated that many parents choose to drive their children to school because of safety concerns related to the bad traffic.

Jean Zeiler, 59 Woodleigh Road, cited Mass General Law Chapter 40, Section 54A and a letter to Building Commissioner Kenneth Cimeno from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation dated March 8, 2010 in relation to the building of the Avery School and the Rail Trail. Ms. Zeiler asked if due to the interest in walking and biking would there be plans to consider the requirements in the information she cited. Ms. Castelli stated that the rail trail is not in scope of service, but VHB is looking at different means of transportation.

Susan Butler, 60 Clark Street, feels the focus of the study should be on the safety of the students. She also feels the crossing guards are mistreated. She would like to see more police presence and tickets issued. She feels the signage around the campus is inconsistent and would like to see the area become a school zone with proper signage in place. Ms. Butler asked VHB if the data collection began when the Walnut Street bridge was opened or closed. Ms. Castelli stated the bridge was closed. Ms. Butler feels students need to be reeducated around safety.

Danielle Deluca, 37 Tarbox Street, would also like to see walking and biking prioritized. She feels people want to bike and walk but don't feel it is a safe option. She would like the Committee to look at alternative options to protect walkers and bikers.

Amy Tiglianidis, 230 Whiting Avenue, explained how most mornings she is unable to get out of her driveway. She expressed her concern for safety and the need to enforce traffic and speeding laws.

Margarita Ramirez, 381 High Street, also explained how she can't get out of her driveway because of traffic and speeding cars and is concerned about her children safely crossing the street. She stated there is no crossing guard near her house and doesn't feel the current signage is working.

Lisa Moran, 78 Lower East Street, also noted the back up of traffic on Whiting Avenue and feels the front of the high school is very dangerous.

Tina Whalen, 18 Elmview Place, asked if VHB can have access to the building rental use calendar to monitor additional activity. She also expressed her concern of the intersection at Mt. Vernon and Abbott as well as Barrows Street. She stated that this meeting is not to discuss the Rail Trail, but is about the safety of the students.

Linder Sweeney, Crossing Guard at Avery and high school, commented on the how people disregard signage and park illegally. She is also concerned about safety.

Dr. Pearrow suggested that VHB speak with the crossing guards.

Rosa Molina, 4 Ridge Avenue, commented on how the sidewalks are too narrow and uneven and there are no curbs separating the sidewalk from street. She feels there needs to be more signage for safer streets.

Mr. Coughlin closed Public Comment.

The Committee thanked the audience members for their suggestions and VHB for their presentation. They asked to please contact the School Committee Chair and Vice Chair with any additional comments. They also noted that a lot of solutions and suggestions require the cooperation of other Town boards and committees. They will try to post frequently asked questions and answers on the website.

Mr. Daley asked to make another comment. Mr. Coughlin stated the Public Comment section was over.

Mr. Rippin thanked the Traffic Directors for their attendance this evening.

Ms. Briggs motioned to adjourn the meeting of May 22, 2019, Dr. Pearrow second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Meeting concluded at 8:35 p.m.