

A special meeting of the Board of Aldermen was held Tuesday, February 7, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the aldermanic chamber.

President Lori Wilshire presided; Alderman Alex Comeau recorded.

Prayer was offered by Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.; Alderman Alex Comeau led in the Pledge to the Flag.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance.

Alderman Alex Comeau called the roll.

The roll call was taken with 12 members of the Board of Aldermen present: Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Klee, Alderman Lopez (arrived at 7:06), Alderman Jette, Alderman Clemons, Alderwoman Kelly (via Zoom), Alderman Comeau, Alderman Dowd, Alderman Gouveia, Alderman Caron, Alderman Thibeault, Alderman Wilshire.

Alderman Sullivan, Alderman Moran, and Alderwoman Timmons were recorded absent.

Mayor James W. Donchess, Corporation Counsel Steven A. Bolton were also in attendance.

PUBLIC HEARING

O-23-040

AMENDING THE LAND USE CODE REGARDING PARKING SPACE REQUIREMENTS FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

Chairman O'Brien

I will now open up the hearing on O-23-040. Alderman Dowd are you able to give us an update on this Ordinance?

Alderman Dowd

Yes. Actually I put this in and the reason being is we're going through the middle school construction. We found that the ordinance which is very old does not reality today. We're just changing the requirements for the middle schools and the high schools from a maximum of two per classroom to 2.5 per classroom. The reason we're doing that is that items have changed since the original ordinance was written. It reflects that we now have paras in almost every classroom. We have extra nurses. We have social workers. We have additional staff. We have full food service staff. So doing it by classroom did not give us enough parking spaces.

To go back and get additional parking spaces requires going through Zoning and Planning. We have a favorable recommendation from Planning to go ahead and pass this because they recognize that it's a process to come back through them and they've always approved it. There's two limiting factors. One is the zoning ordinance which we're endeavoring to change now. The other is physical space on the property. So we can't be adding a ton of parking spaces if we don't have physical space. If we want to add one or two spaces, we need to change the ordinance because there's a maximum of two per classroom. We just added 60 classrooms to Pennichuck Middle School and parking is tight. We have some ideas to add a few parking spaces but rather than having expense to the city to go through all the process the Planning Board agrees that we should change the requirement from 2 maximum to 2.5 because the old ordinance did not take into effect the additional staffing at all the schools today.

Chairman O'Brien

Okay. I'll open it up for questions from members of the Board.

Alderman Klee

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I want to echo Alderman Dowd's comments. I sit on the Planning Board. When we had this discussion truth be told I think that they've come in front of the Planning Board of Zoning Board and each time it gets approved. They see the need. This isn't asking for anything extravagant and so on. As Alderman Dowd pointed out, it just stops at one extra step that has to be done. You have to get approval by fire and everything else any time

you put in any kind of parking spaces. It's already going through that process as part of any build, or any addition, and so on. So I don't see any reason to not approve this today. Thank you.

Alderman Dowd

I think everybody got a copy of the recommendation from the Planning Board. If not, I can read it.

Chairman O'Brien

Is everybody on the Committee satisfied?

Alderman Jette

Yes, thank you Alderman Dowd for that explanation because at first I thought what these middle school kids need – they're driving to school? What's going on?

Alderman Dowd

No, thank god we're not there.

The high school is – we're not building any high schools at any time soon. There's plenty of parking because they park with the students. There's hundreds of cars. That was all approved by variance. We're changing the middle school and the high schools to more reflect today's actual staffing of the schools.

Chairman O'Brien

The Chair would like to welcome Alderman Lopez. For the record, joined us at 7:06. Any other questions by members of the Board?

Alderman Comeau

Yes, thank you Mr. Chair. Not necessarily a question, just a brief comment. It's not entirely germane to this but I would like to see maybe at some point in the future a discussion around the high schools and the charging of students for parking spaces. I think that if we're going to have more space and it's easier for the students to park that it actually makes financial sense for the schools for more kids to drive themselves. Less of a demand for buses and things like that. I just seems silly with all that we pay for schools in the first place to charge students to park. So I'd like to see that conversation come up at some point but I recognize that it is not what we're talking about tonight. Just wanted to mention that.

Chairman O'Brien

Thank you, Alderman Comeau.

Alderman Dowd

Yeah you're correct. It is another subject for another day. It's also for another Board. Parking at the school sites is under the auspices of the Board of Education not the Board of Aldermen. They come up with what gets charged.

Chairman O'Brien

Okay, seeing no further questions by members of the Board. I will terminate that portion and go to receiving testimony. I'll open up anybody from the public who wishes to come forward to offer testimony. I will call first testimony in favor, then testimony in opposition. I will then call for testimony in favor and testimony in opposition. The subject matter is O-23-040.

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION - None

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION - None

Chairman O'Brien closed the public hearing on Ordinance O-23-040 at 7:09 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY ALDERMAN CARON THAT THE FEBRUARY 7, 2023, SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN BE ADJOURNED, BY ROLL CALL

A viva voce roll call was taken which resulted as follows:

Yea: Alderman Klee, Alderman Lopez, Alderman Jette, Alderman Clemons,
Alderman Wilshire, Alderman Comeau, Alderman Dowd, Alderman Gouveia,
Alderman Caron, Alderman Thibeault, Alderwoman Kelly, Alderman O'Brien 12

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was declared adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Alderman Alex Comeau, Clerk Pro Tem