

MEMORANDUM

From: Agassiz Preschool Administration
To: Terry Smith, Somerville Traffic and Parking Department
Cc: Lori Massa, SPCD; Zoning Board of Appeals
Date: May 31, 2009

Re: Additional Information on Parking Management Plan

In response to your comments on our traffic memorandum and parking management plan, we offer the following comments and proposed changes to the plan.

On site parking

Our current staff has a mode split of 50%. Of the six (6) full-time staff members, three (3) drive to work and three do not. Given the estimated mode split of the parents, we expect that one of the two parent helpers on any particular day may drive as well. That means a total of only four (4) cars would be expected to need parking between the hours of 9 am. and 2:30 pm.

Our analysis shows that a tandem parking situation on site, at least for four (4) cars, would not have any significant impact on public safety. These spaces would be for the three (3) employees and one (1) parent helper who may drive on a particular day (the second parent helper, based on our mode split survey, would rarely be driving.) Those vehicles would arrive between 8 and 8:30 am. – 1 vehicle every 7.5 minutes on average. They would all pull in to the driveway frontwards and would not be any different than any other car pulling into a driveway in the morning. In the afternoon, one (1) employee leaves at approximately 1:30 pm. One (1) employee and one (1) parent helper leave between 2:30 pm. and 3 pm. The final employee is on site until later in the afternoon, typically about 4:30 pm. The total trip generation from the site is four (4) arrivals and four (4) departures, spread out over 8.5 hours. We do not think such a level of generation would have a significant impact on Summer Street.

However, given the stated concern of the Traffic and Parking Department, we have taken another look at possible on-site parking arrangements that do not rely on tandem parking. Such an arrangement should be feasible given the limited number of cars seeking off-street parking. We initially looked at the possibility of rearranging the parking area so that it could be a loop with an entrance and exit. Such an arrangement is not feasible without a new curb cut on Spring Street, which would eliminate one on-street parking space. In addition, such an arrangement would have a significant impact on the open space provided at the rear of the site. As a state-regulated early education facility, we are required to provide a certain amount of open space per child. We cannot therefore provide a loop arrangement and can only supply two (2) legal spaces. However, under

such an arrangement there would be adequate space to have vehicles turn around to exit the site frontwards if safety factors warrant such a move.

If we were to limit our parking to those two spaces, the third and fourth vehicle required – for the third full-time employee and parent helper – can be added to the number of vehicles projected to park off-site without a significant impact on the neighborhood. Since those vehicles will be parking long-term, we will work to ensure that they park farther from the site in a legal manner (see below.)

As an additional safety and mitigation measure, the school is prepared to work with the City to install a pedestrian impact recovery system in the nearby crosswalk on Summer Street.

We have reached out to the St. Catherine's Church on a number of occasions to try to arrange the lease of parking spaces for our use in their lots. Unfortunately, to date we have not been successful in these efforts. However, we are committed to continuing our efforts to identify additional off-street parking spaces in the area, and we remain hopeful that we may eventually work out such an arrangement for a number of spaces.

Drop off/pick up practices

In response to your request, we have drafted a more detailed parking distribution plan, which is attached. Based on our survey of current families (attached) and staff, we estimate a total of fourteen (14) vehicles will arrive at the site at peak hour. Of this total, two (2) can park in the driveway. There will therefore be a total of twelve (12) vehicles dropping off.

Our parking distribution plan creates three groups – A, B, and C – of approximately equal sizes. It then assigns a parking “area” to each group. Each parking area has a significant number of parking spaces and should be able to absorb an additional four (4) vehicles for a short period in the morning. Note that many of those who drive to the site do not stay for more than a minute or two, so these four (4) vehicles will not all be parked at the same time. More likely there will be a peak requirement of two (2) on-street parking spaces needed in each group area. Only two (2) vehicles would be parked on the street after 9 am.

The afternoon pickups are spread out over three time periods – noon, 2:30 and 4:30 pm. For the purposes of the analysis below, we assume that there are no noon pickups, since many families who pick up at noon do not drive. Even with that assumption, the parking impacts at 2:30 and 4:30 are far less than during the morning pickup.

Other Issues

We respect the Traffic and Parking Department's concerns about arranging a small number of spaces for the school during the morning dropoff period. While we feel that such spaces might be helpful for both the school and the neighborhood, we do not feel they are at all necessary for safe and efficient circulation in the area.

We have revised our parking management plan and added a more detailed parking distribution plan. These documents are attached – changes to the parking management plan are in strikeout for deletions and bold for additions.

AGASSIZ PRESCHOOL

184 Summer Street

Families by Mode

2009-2010 School Year

Mode	Number
Drive	10
Walk/Bike/Transit	26
TOTAL	36

Parking Demand

AM Peak (8:30-9 am.)

Source	Number	Cars
Teachers	4	3
Parent Helpers	2	1
Families	36	10
TOTAL		14
Spaces		2
Maximum on-street Demand		12

Parking Demand

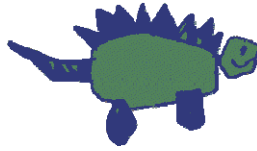
PM Peak (2:30-3 pm.)

Source	Number	Cars
Teachers	4	3
Parent Helpers	2	1
Families	20	6
TOTAL		10
Spaces		2
Maximum on-street Demand		8

Parking Demand

Late PM Peak (4:30-5 pm.)

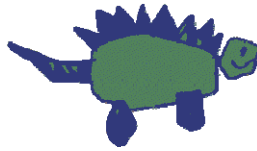
Source	Number	Cars
Teachers	2	2
Parent Helpers	0	0
Families	16	4
TOTAL		6
Spaces		2
Maximum on-street Demand		4



AGASSIZ PRESCHOOL PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN

In order to minimize its traffic and parking impacts on the surrounding neighborhood, Agassiz Cooperative Preschool (“the School”) agrees to implement the following steps:

1. In order to reduce the number of vehicles coming to the site, the School will give preference in admissions to families that live nearby and/or families that take transit, walk, bike or carpool to the site.
2. The School agrees to make proactive efforts to work with St. Catherine’s Church and School to mitigate our joint impacts, including coordinating dropoff strategies and leasing spaces from the Church if offered the opportunity.
3. In order to minimize the number of vehicles that back out of the Summer Street driveway, the School will only make on-site parking spaces available to staff, parent helpers, volunteers, and other long-term visitors to the site **and inform all users of that parking that they should turn around and exit facing forward when possible during busy times such as the morning peak hour.**
4. ~~The School will work with the City to try to identify appropriate on-street parking that might be signed for 5 minute dropoff only from 8:30 to 9 am., subject to Traffic Commission approval.~~
4. In order to distribute the parking impact across a wider area, the School will, **if necessary**, develop and implement a distributed parking plan that will divide parents by children’s age group (Youngest Group, Middle Group, and Oldest Group) and identify different areas for each group to park.
5. The School agrees that it will inform families that they should park farther from the site if they plan to stay for longer than a couple of minutes, in order to keep any available spaces near the School for short-term dropoff.
6. Each family is required to work several “parent help” shifts over the course of the year – enough that there are two parent helpers on-site each day. These parent helpers arrive at 8:30 each morning for the beginning of drop-off. The school agrees to designate one of these parent helpers as a “parking monitor” who will be outside the School from 8:30 to 9 am. to monitor the parking situation as needed and ensure that there are no issues. Current drop-off procedures also include one staff member posted at the entry signing children in; this staff member will share the responsibility of reminding parents of drop-off procedures.
7. The School agrees to include this Management Plan in the Parent’s Handbook and reiterate it to all families at all-school meetings, via email, and as needed.
8. The School commits to keep lines of communication open with the neighbors and the City to identify and resolve any parking issues that arise on an ongoing basis.



DISTRIBUTED PARKING PLAN- AGASSIZ PRESCHOOL

At the beginning of each school year, school administration will create three groups of users of the site:

- **GROUP A** will include parents of youngest group children.
- **GROUP B** will include parents of middle group children.
- **GROUP C** will include parents of oldest group children and any staff that may not have access to the parking spaces on site due to a shortage of supply.

In the event that these three groups are not roughly equivalent in number, the school administration may reassign members to different groups in order to ensure equivalency.

During the morning dropoff period, when the largest number of cars arrives at the site, the groups will be assigned parking as follows:

- **GROUP A** shall park on Summer Street between Belmont and Harvard Streets, Harvard Street and Spring Street.
- **GROUP B** shall park on Benton Road, Summer Street west of Harvard Street, and side streets between Central Street and Benton Road.
- **GROUP C** shall park on Belmont Street, Lowell Street and Summer Street west of Belmont Street.

Families are generally expected to use the same parking assignments when picking up their children in the afternoon, particularly for a 2:30 pm. pickup.

When serving as a parent helper, a parent who is driving to the site should park with their normal group rather than in the driveway, or make some other arrangement for legal longer-term parking.

School administration will evaluate this plan every year and make adjustments as needed to maximize its effectiveness.



Fort Hill
**INFRASTRUCTURE
SERVICES**

May 20, 2009

Mr. Kevin Prior, Chair
Somerville Planning Board
93 Highland Avenue
Somerville, Massachusetts 02143

RE: Proposed Agassiz School – 184 Summer Street

Dear Mr. Prior and Members of the Board:

Fort Hill Infrastructure Services, LLC has prepared this letter at the request of the Agassiz School and in support of their application for a Special Permit to utilize the structure at 184 Summer Street as a school. The school requested that we evaluate the adequacy of their on-site parking. We have also been asked to examine the possibility of a pick-up/drop-off area in front of the structure to address concerns raised by abutters to the project. Based on our review of the available materials and our site visit, it is our opinion that the use of the facility as a school will not result in parking impacts to the neighborhood.

Description of Site and Improvements

The existing residential structure, which is located at the corner of Summer Street and Spring Street, would be converted from a residence to a school building. Minor structural modifications and renovations would be completed in conjunction with the reuse plan. In addition, improvements are proposed to the parking area to slightly increase the size of the driveway. However, due to open space requirements inherent to the type of use proposed, additional on-site parking is neither feasible nor desired.

The current driveway is approximately 20 feet by 60 feet and will accommodate six (6) vehicles, parked in tandem in two columns of three rows. This is the arrangement that was followed when the structure was used as a multifamily residence. The previous arrangement appeared to work well for the multifamily use, which is dependent on a high degree of cooperation between tenants.

Description of Zoning Relief Required

According to the OSPCD Planning Division staff, the site requires eight (8) parking spaces – one for each staff member and each assisting parent. Only six (6) tandem parking spaces are proposed, two (2) of which are considered legal parking spaces for the purposed of zoning. The site also has two (2) grandfathered parking spaces due to its previous use as a 2 family home that would have had to provide a total of four (4) parking spaces. The deficiency in spaces is

therefore 4 spaces (8 minus 4.) Under the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, that number is cut in half to two (2) spaces. A special permit is required for relief from these two (2) spaces.

Concerns Raised

Several concerns have been raised relative to the proposed use of the site as a school. The two concerns related to traffic backing out of the driveway and to pick-up/drop-off activities. Each concern is addressed below.

Backing Out of Driveway

Concerns have been raised regarding the safety of vehicles backing out of the driveway. The basis of this concern is the volume and speed of traffic on Summer Street and the potential for increased traffic exiting the site from the driveway. However, we believe that the proposed condition will represent a reduced propensity for collisions between vehicles on Summer Street and vehicles backing out of the site.

Multifamily units generate as many as ten trips per day (five in and five out), which would be as many as 50 potential conflicts from backing out in a 24-hour period. The proposed use will result in staff members parking all day and backing out only once. As a result, there would be only six (6) potential conflicts, which would occur, mostly off-peak (at school release times). While it is possible that there could be a few more trips per day to run errands, it is highly unlikely that the proposed use will result in more backing out trips than the multifamily use.

As a result, we have concluded that the proposed use will result in an *improvement* to the current situation by *reducing* the likelihood of conflicts between vehicles on Summer Street and vehicles backing out of the driveway.

Pick-Up and Drop-Off Activities

Abutters to the project have raised concerns about how pick-up/drop-off activities will be managed at the site. The basis of this concern is the change in use, which will result in more arrivals and departures from the site, especially in the morning peak hour. Based on our review of the site and the management plan proposed by the Agassiz School – which includes preference for families that live nearby and/or do not drive to the site, as well as a possible parking distribution plan for families that do drive – we believe that the increased pick-up/drop-off activity can be successfully addressed.

The school presently anticipates an enrollment of 40 students. However, based on studies of the incoming student body, only 10 to 13 of the 40 students will arrive by automobile. The balance of the students will arrive by other transportation mode

(bike/walk/transit). In addition, some families bring more than one student to the school; however, to ensure a more conservative estimate of pick-up/drop-off demand, this factor has not been included in estimates of automobile arrivals and departures.

Drop-off activities occur between 8:30 AM and 9:00 AM. This represents a drop-off period of 30 minutes. Assuming a conservative drop-off demand of 15 vehicles (which is higher than the rate projected by the school), the school can anticipate an average arrival rate of approximately one vehicle every two minutes. This estimate assumes a distributed arrival rate, which is a reasonable assumption under the circumstances.

Pick-up activities occur over a longer span of time. Some children are picked up at noon. School is released at 2:30, but approximately half of the students participate in an extended day program which runs to 4:30 most days of the week. Due to this more attenuated release scenario, the morning peak hour represents the design period. This is also true because most pick-up activities occur outside of the peak hour of the adjacent street network, whereas the drop-off activities occur during the peak period of the adjacent street system.

Typically, the dwell time for drop-off activities can be kept to approximately two (2) minutes if the process is managed well. As a result, we would anticipate that there would be demand for no more than two vehicles at any one time. With approximately 90 feet of available curb space on the Summer Street side of the property, there is ample space for three vehicles to stop and discharge their passengers. The school has also expressed a willingness to develop a distributed parking plan if needed. Such a plan would break the driving families into groups and assign each group an area they should park whenever possible, especially if they plan to stay for more than two (2) minutes. For example, one-third of cars might be assigned to park on one set of streets, another third on another set of streets, and the remaining third on another set of streets. The school is willing to ensure that their parents' manual describes any plan and that it be reinforced via annual instruction, email, and at all-school meetings.

In order to ensure that this pick-up and drop-off area is properly managed, the City might want to consider installing signs to inform motorists of the limited drop-off periods. These signs will also allow the City to enforce violators of this management plan. In addition, the school should consider posting a staff member along the curb during drop-off times to keep parents moving along.

Additional Activities in the Area

Presently, Saint Catherine's Church and School both place demands on Summer Street. The church hosts funerals, masses, and other activities throughout the week. The school has similar drop-off and pick-up activities. These activities are managed appropriately at most times, and the school is willing to work with St. Catherine's Church and School to develop a common plan that could address any remaining problems. The school is also willing to lease a number of spaces from the Church should they have the opportunity to do so. It is anticipated that these activities will have no impact on the operations of the Agassiz School.

Conclusion

We have carefully reviewed each aspect of the parking proposed for the Agassiz School. Based on our review, we have concluded that the parking for the site can be properly managed. Parking for staff can be properly accommodated. Pick-up and drop-off activities can be managed to minimize impacts on Summer Street traffic, neighbors, and adjacent land uses. Accordingly, we recommend that the Planning Board recommend that the Zoning Board of Appeals grant the Special Permit for the Agassiz School.

Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at your convenience. I can be reached at (617) 722-3020.

Very truly yours,
FORT HILL INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES, LLC

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. F. Lyons Jr.", is positioned above the printed name.

William F. Lyons Jr., P.E., P.T.O.E.
President