

An Open Letter to the Community

There has been much discussion over the last several weeks regarding the new parking lot at Great Neck North High School. Please allow me the opportunity to clarify the facts pertaining to this project.

In advance of a proposed bond referendum, the Shared Decision Making Committees (SDMC) from each of our ten schools, composed of administrators, teachers, parents and students at the secondary level, were charged with identifying safety, educational and structural projects deemed important to each facility. After each school's SDMC prioritized its needs, the proposed bond projects were then discussed with members of the district administration, the Board of Education, and the Board of Education Citizens Advisory Committee, which is composed of administrators, teachers, parents, residents without children enrolled in the district, and students.

The North High School shared decision-making process included significant discussion to evaluate the need for additional parking, select the location, and present the plans for the new parking lot as part of the bond referendum. The parking site, adjacent to the North High School campus, is located on the corner of Beach Road and Polo Road and has been the subject of discussion for many years. This property is not viable for athletic purposes. With poor drainage, the field is often muddy and a breeding ground for mosquitoes. The parking lot was one of several items identified by the SDMC in both the proposed February 2017 and the May 2017 bond referendums. The primary purpose of this new lot is to address student safety and the lack of adequate on-site parking for faculty, staff, students and visitors to the building.

North High School has long outgrown its existing parking capacity. Since the creation of the Optional Zone in 2008, which helped to equalize enrollments at North and South High Schools, the population at North High School has increased by 200 students. The additional on-campus parking that will be created through this initiative will ensure the safety of our students before, during and after the school day. Cars that once parked on local streets will be redirected to the new parking lot. As an open campus, this parking lot will allow the school

administration to prevent the unauthorized use of student vehicles throughout the school day.

During the 2016-17 school year, the school district administration and the Board of Education hosted over thirty public bond referendum presentations which included a visual description of the proposed North High School parking lot project as well as other items represented in the bond referendum. The North High School parking lot was also included in the bond referendum newsletters that were mailed to all Great Neck residents in February and May 2017. These materials were translated into four languages, and bond related materials remain posted on the district website. On May 16, 2017 the community voted to support the bond referendum with a 77 percent pass rate.

The district has listened to concerns expressed by neighboring residents. The parking area will maintain a 30 foot wide, undisturbed tree-lined area along Beach Road and neighboring residential properties. Additionally, approximately 60 quick-growing Leyland cypress trees will be planted around the perimeter of the parking lot to provide additional screening and privacy for our neighbors. A new drainage system will address residents concerns about storm runoff and will improve overall drainage in the area. The parking lot will only be utilized during daytime hours and security personnel will patrol the area at night. Gates will also be installed to prevent unauthorized access onto school grounds.

I hope this information clarifies our district's plan for the construction of the North High School parking lot. We have responded to student safety concerns expressed by our parents and the building administration. Issues shared by our neighbors will be carefully considered and addressed in the final design of the North High School parking lot.

Dr. Teresa Prendergast, Superintendent
Great Neck Public Schools