

Threshing Session
Sunday, December 20, 2020
At the rise of Meeting for Worship

Time: We will aim to start at 12:30 and end after approximately an hour (and no later than 2:00)

Regarding Threshing Sessions, generally

Please review this document:

<https://quaker-prod.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/store/f6d5c289cd0cad14c1204d4c6921aacd6c9214ce7cf834875d9dc5f871bd>

Purpose of Threshing Session

This session is to discuss concerns regarding development of parking on the Meeting grounds. Throughout discussions regarding parking at Business Meetings, members have expressed the importance of preserving and protecting our grounds, and ensuring the on-going vitality of our meeting by providing adequate parking. This session is primarily to discuss the fundamental question of whether the Meeting wishes to construct additional parking on the Meeting grounds or not. *The Threshing Session is not to make a decision*, but rather to hear all concerns and perspectives. All decisions will be made during scheduled Meetings for Worship with Attention to Business.

Secondarily, if there is time, the session will be a forum to clarify concerns regarding the Boucher & James plan which has been previously presented to Business Meeting (most recently on December 6, 2020), discuss the possible timeline to have parking available by fall/winter 2021, and to discuss the benefits and difficulties of phasing construction.

Recommendation of the Ad Hoc Parking Committee ("the Committee")

The Committee will recommend to the Meeting that:

- 1) the Boucher & James ("B&J") plan ("the Plan") be confirmed by Monthly Meeting and presented for approval to Newtown Borough in January,
- 2) the Meeting task the Committee with selecting and supervising a construction company, and
- 3) construction of the entire plan occurs during the summer of 2021.

Supporting Rationale

The Plan optimizes the number of parking spaces while preserving our oldest and most valued trees -

- The Plan will provide a total of 49 parking spots, a reduction of 8 spots compared to our current arrangement. The Meeting now has access to parking for 57 cars on the Meeting grounds plus the Court Street lot.
- The Committee consulted with B&J, two arborists and a landscape designer regarding the relative health and importance of our trees, different potential layouts, and a variety of surface materials (or no surface material). This Plan maximally preserves our trees and minimizes potential future damage to the grounds.

We believe the Plan is in compliance with local ordinance -

- Newtown Borough requires one space for every three occupants of an assembly area. The proposed Plan would allow a maximum capacity of 147 in the Meetinghouse. When the expansion was built, the requirement was satisfied by the contract to park in the neighboring Stockburger lot.

Adequate parking is critical to the vitality of our Meeting community

- There is no public transportation to the Meetinghouse.
- Only a small number of our members live within walking distance.

- Other than the few members who live nearby and can walk or bike, all of our members drive. Lack of on-site parking may present a barrier to attendance in bad weather. Any barrier to attendance can discourage participation.
- Lack of on-site parking is a particular hardship on those with mobility issues and families with small children - both populations that we wish to encourage to attend.
- Different (i.e. offsite) parking arrangements will be confusing to newcomers and those unfamiliar with our Meeting.
- Contractual arrangements for offsite parking are time limited and do not provide a long term solution.
- If there is a negative impact and membership/attendance is reduced then it could be difficult to reverse this effect.

Formal paved parking areas minimize maintenance costs, minimize damage to trees and plantings, enhance the safety of pedestrians, and meet municipal ordinance requirements.

- Hard paved surfaces are easiest to maintain
- In practice, soils under and around pervious surface materials become as impervious as pavement. Any place where cars are parked on a regular basis will become compacted. This is why Borough authorities treat pervious materials the same as pavement with respect to stormwater management.
- Clearly defined parking areas discourage parking on lawns or under trees which leads to damage of plantings. Parking within the dripline of the trees, even a few times, poses a significant risk to the trees.
- Clearly defined parking areas and walkways are safer for pedestrians than informal, unmarked parking (if parking on the grass and along the driveway is allowed). Clear demarcation through painted lines, fencing and landscaping will separate cars from people.
- Paved parking is less likely to pose slip hazards. It is more easily cleared of snow and ice and less likely to have muddy or uneven areas.
- Local ordinances have specifications for parking lots.

Access to the Court Street lot (aka Stockburger lot) may be curtailed at any time

- Court & State, LLC's development plan has received final approval from the Borough. The developer plans to start work on the State Street site soon. While construction on the Court Street lot will not occur until later in 2021, the developer is likely to use the lot for equipment and supplies. So parking access may be terminated with 30 days notice.

Use of alternative parking lots exposes the Meeting to a repeat of the current situation

- To date, the Stockingworks lot has been made available to the Meeting for special event and overflow parking out of the generosity of the owner. He has been clear that should we require parking on a regular basis, a formal arrangement would be necessary. Negotiating a lease would not be expected to pose a problem, however, any likely lease would have an expiration date. At expiration, the Meeting could well find itself in the same situation as it is in now.
- The Owner may decide to sell at any time.
- There is no guarantee that the parking lots will remain parking lots.
- For these reasons, relying on property owned by a third party places the resource outside of the Meeting's control.

Use of alternative parking lots will not reduce the Meeting's carbon footprint

- Because the vast majority of our members drive their own cars, parking in a remote lot will not reduce the carbon footprint of our gathering.

- More effective methods of reducing the environmental impact would be carpooling or converting to all electric cars.
- Use of a shuttle service or valet parking to mitigate the impact of remote parking on families and the less mobile, would likely increase the carbon footprint of the Meeting as engines idle while waiting for passengers or drivers. A shuttle service would cost \$300 per day. Valet parking would cost \$90 per valet with 3-4 valets required. Expecting volunteers to perform either of these services would require significant effort to recruit and ensure availability. Experience with other regularly scheduled functions suggests that this would be challenging.

Construction over the late spring/summer of 2021 would result in parking being available when we are able to meet again in person

- Approval of the Plan is expected to take 2-3 months at minimum.
- Construction is easiest to complete during the summer when the weather is good and usage (even in non-Covid times) is light.
- Pandemic restrictions on gatherings are likely to continue for many months into 2021. Should restrictions be lifted by the fall or winter, we would need parking to be available.

Construction of a Parking Lot can be reversed in the future

- Should parking no longer be needed in the future, pavement can be removed and landscaping restored.

Phasing of construction is inefficient, will increase costs and may not be allowed

- Phased construction would allow the Meeting to experience limitations on parking and more fully appreciate the impact on the community. However, phasing would likely increase costs as materials and equipment would need to be deployed twice.
- If construction is undertaken, the Borough is likely to require the Meeting to come into compliance with parking and capacity ordinances.

Background Exhibit

History

- NMM had permission to park on the Court Street lot from George Stockburger
- Discussions regarding purchasing the lot were held over an extended period of time. Stockburger always refusing any offer made.
- In January, 2018, the Meeting learned that the property was being marketed as a package with the State Street garage. A Committee (Norval, Joe, Rich, Martin, Chiyo with Carol advising) was formed and tasked with negotiating with Stockburger to purchase the lot. Offers were made.
- February, 2018 Stockburger accepted an offer from Nate Torok. Torok paid \$2.9 million for the State Street and Court Street properties.
- March 2018 – a Strategic Planning Sub- Committee (originally Moriuchi, Vari, Good) of Building & Grounds was formed to investigate overall plans for the Meeting’s property. Mark Silverman and Bill Heinemann soon joined. Dwight decided not to continue to participate. It became evident that parking issues would need to be understood. This sub-committee focused its attention on the Torok’s development and became the Ad Hoc Parking Committee.
- September 2018 – a Parking Agreement was completed with the Toroks.

Ad Hoc Parking Committee Members: Bill Heinemann, Peter Vari, Chiyo Moriuchi, Mark Silverman

Meeting Approvals Received

March, 2019 Approved:	Develop a feasible parking plans and retain legal & engineering advice
July, 2020 Approved:	Further develop the parking plan and obtain the local municipal approvals so that should the meeting decide to construct the parking lot, it is in control of the timing.

Tasks Completed by the Ad Hoc Parking Committee

- Investigated potential capacity of Torok’s Court Street lot
- Negotiated with the Toroks about the potential purchase of the Court Street lot
- Met with Don Marshall regarding legal strategy and alternatives
- Investigated potential layouts and capacity of parking on Meeting property
 - Peter Vari’s
 - Dumack Engineering
 - Boucher and James
- Maintained communications with the Toroks
- Attended and commented at Borough Planning, Zoning and Council meetings to monitor and comment on the Torok’s development.
- Consulted with two arborists regarding the health, value and protection of trees on the Meeting grounds.
- Consulted with Waitkus Design regarding alternative surfaces, areas and plantings of concern, thoughts on pedestrian flow and master planning for our property.
- Reported to Monthly Business Meeting regularly.
 - Updates to Business Meeting in April, May, July, September 2019. At July, 2019 meeting, the committee was asked to explore parking options on the meeting’s property and authorized to retain an engineer.

- In September, the Committee reported that it was clear Torok would not sell and that Waitkus design would be retained to support planning for our site.
- Further updates January, February, March, July, October and December 2020.
- The July report was quite detailed reviewing the plan developed by Boucher & James. The Meeting APPROVED moving forward to obtain Borough approval to execute the plan. Once approvals were obtained, it was agreed that the Meeting would then have the opportunity to consider whether or not to move ahead with all or portions of construction.
- The Plan to be submitted shows the maximum number of spots possible (49 total) on the property while still preserving trees. This is a reduction from the number of spots currently available (57 which includes all the spots in the Stockburger lot and our own). Below is a satellite view of the Stockburger lot outlining the spaces available.

