

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF
COMMON COUNCIL HELD TUESDAY,
MARCH 11, 1997 AT THE MIDDLE
SCHOOL CAFETERIA.

(Distributed: 3/27/97)
(Approved : 5/6/97)

The meeting was called to order by President Clark at 7:30 p.m.

Present on Roll Call: President Clark, Councilmembers Dill, Hatfield, Martin, Muñoz, (arrived 7:55 p.m.) Ogden and Rosen. Also present were Mayor Long (arrived 8:25 p.m.), Staff members Angelo, Chandross, and Schneller and Parking Advisory Committee members Akers, Burkholder, Cohan, D'Ambola, DelRosso, Dewey, Hughes, Huneke, Mazzeo, Ryder, Steiner, and Toth.

Minutes of this meeting are recorded on Cassette Tape #97-16, Section 0000- End, #97-17, Section 0000-1172.

President Clark then led the Flag Salute.

"Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by the City Clerk in the preparation of a Special Meeting Notice, dated February 5, 1997, which set forth the date, time, and place of this meeting and by properly posting such notice and forwarding the notice to those designated newspapers and the persons requesting meeting notices.

As has been the practice in the past and agreed to by past Presidents and current President Clark, minutes of meetings such as this are a summary of the comments made and do not necessarily touch upon every comment or identify who made the comment.

President Clark advised that the purpose of the meeting was to have the Parking Advisory Committee's Report amplified and that it would be presented by its Chairman B.J. Cohan.

He emphasized that the hearing was to have input from residents, downtown property owners, employers and employees regarding the need for additional parking and not to discuss the parking rate changes which would be dealt with at the March 18th meeting when the subject ordinance was scheduled for hearing. He emphasized that the Council would not be making a decision tonight.

B.J. Cohan introduced the members of her committee and reviewed its activities and the report as follows:

“In the last year, the intertwining of our downtown and our cars increased with the advent of NJ Transit’s Midtown Direct service to Manhattan. To some, this *intertwining* has become a *noose*, choking Summit’s downtown and those who use it.

You have heard proposed solutions several times in the past few years. Again, this evening, a proposed solution, developed by the parking advisory committee, is before the council and the community.

Tonight, we invite you to comment on this proposal and parking in general but first, we’d like you to take a few minutes to review how we got to this point, share some details and to review our recommendations. The presentation is short, hopefully informative and following this, we look forward to your comments.

A few words on Summit and the importance of its downtown.

Summit is not a self-contained community. Many residents leave each day to work elsewhere. But Summit is not a traditional suburban bedroom community ...because for each person who leaves Summit each morning, another arrives from somewhere else, to work here.

Each morning, outbound commuters come downtown to park near the train station. Then, two thousand people ... some of you among them ... come to work in downtown Summit. Many come by car. Later, shoppers and clients arrive. Almost all of them need a parking space!

Increasingly ... especially since last summer ... they are not finding that parking space. Early commuters are safe; the lots have space when they arrive. But the person who needs a space after 8:30 is in trouble. Recently a resident complained that, after dropping his daughter at school, he is out of luck finding a space for the 8:37 train. Currently, he must leave his daughter in the cold at 8:15 to find a space and catch that train.

Someone who works in a shop that opens at 9:30 or 10; a lawyer or consultant who returns from seeing a client; a commuter whose New York job starts at 11:30; a resident with an afternoon appointment in New York. Their chances of finding a space are slim to none since the advent of Midtown Direct.

Desperate for a parking space, some people are paying \$14 a day and taking valuable spaces in the shopper parking lots. Others “creep” to residential streets where they park, and then walk downtown. A few meet co-workers and car pool from the residential areas adjacent to downtown, and then share the cost of parking.

All these people are part of the “community of Summit” ...even the non-resident commuter who uses Summit only as a parking place each day, but who returns on Thursday night for dinner and shops here on Saturday... is part of the “community of Summit.”

So parking and downtown Summit *remain* intertwined. The fact is though, there are not enough people, and not enough money in Summit to support this wonderful downtown alone. Two thirds of the people who shop in our downtown don't live here. If we allow parking problems to drive them away, we who live here will lose the downtown that attracted us here in the first place.

So, for a moment, let's take a look back: Before the 1950's, parking wasn't much of an issue. During the 50's, the face of DeForest, Elm and Maple Streets saw change as about 650 spaces were developed in those lots. During the 60's, we developed the Broad Street lot and the Sampsons lot right here at the "Junior High", and the 70's, the tiered lot...two decades and more than 1000 spaces. During the 1980's, only 100 spaces were added at the Post Office lot.

During the last 20 years the call for more parking has continued. A parade of consultants and committees have made the same recommendation - MORE PARKING!

Then, in 1993, NJ Transit announced that it would actually build the long-discussed Kearny Connection. The rails of our own Morris & Essex lines would join the rails of the Northeast Corridor in Kearny, allowing people from this area to travel to midtown Manhattan without changing seats.

NJ Transit approached Summit with an idea, one that sounded too good to be true. NJ transit would spend almost \$9 million building a new parking garage in Summit. City officials, sensing an opportunity to solve some of the downtown problems at no cost to the local taxpayer, were receptive. A committee was appointed, (Kearny 1) and it recommended acceptance of NJ Transit's offer.

But NJT's conditions proved unpopular. Under the proposed plan, the city would lose control over its own parking resources. Concern grew that a new 600-car, four-level garage would provide ample parking for commuters...including commuters from other towns...but really do nothing to solve the problems of downtown employees and shoppers. Ultimately, the offer was rejected.

Another committee was appointed. It took a broader look at parking and concluded that the real problem was parking for downtown employees. It recommended a 500-car garage on two levels. This proposal was rejected by NJ Transit as uneconomical and inadequate.

And so, now this parking advisory committee takes its turn at analyzing this issue. But....some things have changed.

The first Kearny Connection task force was formed in reaction to NJ Transit's offer. The second Kearny Connection task force was formed in reaction to the city's rejection of NJ Transit's offer. The current parking advisory committee was formed not in reaction, but to recommend action.

This committee was appointed to serve until the end of 1997, and charged with addressing parking issues in Summit...not just to build or not build a single structure.

This committee had the luxury of being formed after the Kearny Connection ... now called Midtown Direct ... opened. It did not have to speculate, or evaluate NJ Transit's projections of the popularity of Midtown Direct. All it had to do was look at the parking lots. The Broad St. lot used to have some vacant spaces all day long. Now it is full by 8:30 ... 8:00 if you're a non-resident.

It had only to listen to the complaints of late commuters and other residents unable to find a parking space. In fact, one member joined our committee after he complained constantly of no parking for late commuters.

Suddenly, the plight of the downtown employee and some commuters was the same as the historic plight of the downtown shopper: no place to park!

Quickly, our new committee concluded that the #1 parking issue in Summit was space for downtown employees. We needed to get them out of park & shop lots, out of on-street spaces, and out of residential neighborhoods. Any solution had to address this situation.

So, in an effort to leave no stone unturned, the committee reviewed 17 alternatives and their variations. They ranged from the practical to the not-so-practical. All discussion kept returning to the former railroad freight yard on Broad Street. Even then, on the Broad St. lot alone, five different alternatives were discussed and analyzed. It continued to emerge as the most logical site.

The committee remained very aware of the community's objections to NJ Transit's proposed 600-car, four-level garage. Those objections were loss of local control to NJ Transit, size and bulk of the garage, traffic congestion, and fear of crime.

In coming to a final recommendation, the committee reached some general conclusions about what is possible and realistic:

1. **Regulation has run its course.** The current situation is so serious that changing parking fees, installing no-parking signs, and other regulatory tweaking will not yield significant results.
2. **Non-residents ARE part of the Summit community.** We cannot invite them to shop in our stores and support our local economy, but lock them out of our parking lots.

There are no practical "surface" solutions . The committee appreciates and supports a reluctance to build new buildings, especially big, expensive ones that don't tend to be pretty. But, with the cost of property in downtown Summit, buying occupied sites, ripping down buildings, and converting the site to surface parking, is a very expensive alternative. Not to mention the loss of tax revenues.

3. **NJ Transit's money comes with strings.** This should come as no surprise. Their job is to run a transportation system, not to provide parking for Summit's downtown employees. But the committee also concluded that the strings ... the unrestricted use of parking for non-resident commuters,... might keep Summit from solving its own problems.
4. **Broad St. is the best location.** This site emerges from a practical standpoint, from the standpoint of public acceptance, from the standpoint of traffic, from the standpoint of impact on the community. All roads lead to Broad St.

And so the committee has recommended that a new 400-car garage be built on the Broad St. lot. This lot will yield 250 new parking spaces. Because the committee does not think 250 is enough, it also recommends that a small lot of 50 spaces be built adjacent to the fire house on Broad St.

Both facilities should be built with city funds ... without help from NJ Transit. All 300 new spaces should serve Summit commuters and people who work in downtown Summit.

Preliminary estimates put the cost at \$5.5 million for both facilities. We believe that increases in parking fees for all long term lots will cover that cost.

These recommendations address the critical issue of supply. They do not pretend address more specific issues which will evolve as the project develops. They also take into consideration the four main objections to the original NJ Transit proposal for a 600-car garage.

Control: By paying for this garage locally, we maintain control over its use. The committee recommends that ... after construction ... Summit continue to welcome the 189 non-residents who park at Broad St. each day. But the committee sees no obligation on the city's part to increase the number of spaces provided for non-residents.

Bulk: We think a three-level garage will meet the objections voiced earlier.

This diagram shows that a three-level garage is actually not as tall as a two-story house with peaked roof.

Those two people are not walking on air. They show that the second level will actually be even with the sidewalk at the corner of Broad St. and Summit Ave. At the bridge over the railroad tracks, the garage will extend only about four feet above the existing concrete bridge wall.

Garages do not have to be ugly. Here is the new three-level precast concrete garage at the Short Hills Mall. You won't find it in *Architectural Digest*, but at least it's not ugly.

This is the entrance to a parking garage in Gettysburg, PA., with a brick facade and attractive entrance.

And here is a three-level garage at Morristown Memorial Hospital. With plantings, it barely breaks the horizon and is certainly far from ugly.

Here is another slide that illustrates the committee's recommendation. It also illustrates why a taller garage makes more sense than a two-level structure.

The existing Broad St. lot is 135 feet wide and 900 feet long.

- The top shows the recommendation of the second Kearny task force: a 500-car, two-level building providing 250 additional spaces, but taking up most of the lot.
- The bottom shows that a three-level, 400-car garage would provide the same 250 additional cars but use much less of the property.

Traffic: With its 600-car proposal, NJ Transit commissioned a traffic study to assess the impact on downtown traffic. The study recommended only that the timing of traffic lights be changed slightly. Our engineering and traffic experts reviewed that conclusion, and found nothing wrong with it.

So we can conclude that, #1, a 400-car garage would have even less impact on traffic, And #2, the users would be Summit residents and people coming to work in Summit. This is existing traffic... these are the people currently creating more traffic driving around looking for parking spaces!

Fear of crime: Based on available information, both locally and nationally, this is a problem of perception. Crime is not a major problem in parking garages. Crime is not a problem in the city's existing 450-car garage. Nevertheless, the committee *has* recommended that great attention be given to security issues, so that the garage is safe, and is perceived to be safe.

After the committee's recommendations were announced, some people in the community raised additional issues. Although the committee's report does not directly address these issues, we do want to mention them here tonight.

The first is the question of size ... but from a new perspective. Some of you tonight are wearing buttons that say **Build 400 new**, meaning that 300 new spaces is not enough. There are a variety of opinions on this issue. Some are skeptical. Some suggest we should build as many spaces as possible right now, when we have the chance. Others argue that 300 will meet the realistic need for some years to come. The answer is not clear.

There is also the question of cost. At \$21,000 apiece, an additional hundred spaces would cost about \$2 million more. We do not think increased parking fees will cover that \$2 million. The city might be required to subsidize a garage of that size.

Which brings me to the other question that has been raised: **The project has to pay for itself.** Standing alone, this garage cannot pay for itself with rates any less than about \$7 per day. This is not a fair rate to charge commuting residents and downtown employees. We've proposed a systematic increase in fees in all the city's long term lots, which we think will cover the debt on the new 400-car garage.

But more important....as we look at parking citywide ... both all-day lots and shopper parking ... we see that it currently generates revenue for the city and will continue to do so. That revenue lessens the tax burden on the taxpayers. By the time we begin to pay debt on this proposed garage, the downtown garage, the tiered lot, will be paid for, reducing the city's annual debt costs by more than \$200,000. We are confident that this project can be absorbed into the city's budget without placing a burden on taxpayers.

The most frequently asked question however is...What's next? Where will the next garage be built and what will it cost? What are the plans for the future? We hope these are signs that people see the wisdom of the committee's current recommendation and the need to move forward.

Certainly we understand that there are still questions about this proposal: Is it big enough? Should it have a fancier facade, at higher cost? Who will manage it? And also, What is the long term plan for more parking? The committee has recommended that Council hire a parking consultant to determine the available options on these specific issues.

The committee will continue to look closely at issues that will affect future parking needs but those needs are difficult to forecast. When the city added 800 parking spaces in the 1960's, who thought that another 1200 would be needed? When the existing garage was built almost 20 years ago, did anyone imagine that another one would be needed?

Even a year or two ago, people were dismissing NJ Transit's ridership forecasts as pipe dreams. I would repeat to you that the committee sees this recommendation as a **FIRST STEP.**

The committee has identified other possible sites for more construction. The proposed 400-car garage could even be expanded in the future.

We do not, however, think we can develop a 10-year or 20-year plan, because things change. For instance, NJ Transit is building additional parking in eight other towns along the Morris & Essex line, some 1100 additional spaces in all. Will these reduce the demand on Summit's non-resident spaces? If so, can the existing non-resident spaces be recaptured for local use? Constant monitoring of the situation is the first step in any long range plan.

There are too many variables for us to develop a hard-and-fast plan for the future. We have identified alternatives, but we need to remain flexible.

Finally, the committee believes that this recommendation will provide significant relief from the city's current parking crisis. We welcome the opportunity to turn this recommendation over to the council for action. Having done so, the committee plans to move on to the many other parking issues that face the city.

Comments and questions from the public were as follows:

1. Questioned the demand.
2. Need more than proposed.
3. Bulk should not be the issue.
4. On-street parking problem now will be exacerbated when the garage is built thus use of Prospect Street should be considered.
5. (Burkholder) - demand, as estimated by Kearny Task Forces, is 1,400 more spaces.
6. Doubt downtown can live if construction takes two or three years.
7. Suggest emergency parking behind the station.
8. Why did other towns take advantage of NJT parking and not Summit.
9. (Burkholder) - Parking being currently built is on property owned or acquired by NJT and such action requires no permission.
10. Consider underground parking.
11. (Clark) - Underground parking is very expensive.
12. Concerned that employees will not use the garage at Broad Street.
13. Suggest a structure behind Springfield Avenue and eventhough it would cost more, it would solve the problem.
14. Parking problem perception hurts Summit.
15. Remove all parking meters and make town user friendly.

16. (New Providence resident) - After dropping off kids at Child Care Center, there is no non-resident spaces and proposal will not resolve that problem.
17. Position statement of 2005 delivered which is attached.
18. Solution should not cause harm to the residential character of Summit and garage should pay for itself.
19. Escavate first level for future expansion.
20. Questioned Eminent Domain rights of NJT.
21. (Clark) - Eminent Domain is possible and City will try and coordinate solutions to Summit's parking problems with NJT.
22. Referenced Tom Getzendanner's concept of a tax base shift to residents caused by lack of parking. Note: Tom Getzendanner left a prepared statement which is attached hereto.
23. Work with NJ Transit to create a new station platform off the Broad Street lot which might free up the Cobblestone Lot for other uses.
24. (Springfield resident) - Non-residents are part the community but have not been considered regarding increased parking.
25. NJT should have offered more of a middle ground on their proposed garage.
26. (Burkholder) - NJT offered a 600 car garage which after all the trade-offs netted 350 new spaces at a cost of 9 million dollars which occurred after long and hard negotiations, but it was felt not enough was coming to the City.
27. Fix sidewalks and improve lighting to encourage walking to the station.
28. (Springfield resident) - Concerned over closing of non-resident parking during construction.
29. (New Providence resident):
 - a) Moved to area because of good train and bus service.
 - b) Shore communities lost ability to have tier fees for beach use.
30. (Springfield resident) -Suggest designating employee spaces.

31. Time is wasted by employees searching for spaces.
32. Chamber of Commerce:
 - a) Supports the report.
 - b) Support parking for Summit by Summit.
 - c) Presented petitions with 1,879 signatures, 670 of which were from Summit.
 - d) Emphasized a healthy downtown has a positive impact on the total community.
33. (Berkeley Heights resident) - Summit is a train hub and action would be shortsighted if non-resident parking is not included.
34. Build now because of low interest rates.
35. Lunch time search for new spaces does not permit shopping and not happy with shuttle bus concept.
36. Reference made to monstrous garages in Edison which did not want to see in Summit.
37. Build largest that NJT would pay for which would keep the rates reasonable and then allow City to designate other lots.
38. Questioned deed restriction regarding Village Green.
39. Downtown disruption caused by construction is not worth a "small fix" and should build to add 400 new.
40. Solution does not solve parking problem.
41. Feel 500 more needed.
42. Concerned it would not pay for itself.
43. Suggest create central administration for parking.
44. Consider second level to DeForest lots to get parking in town.
45. Referenced previous recommendation to beautification of the triangle and will provide architectural rendering of same.
46. Concerned over closing of shops.

47. Look at all possible areas to address the parking problem.
48. It is an overall community problem since the businesses are part of the community and support the various charities in town.
49. Summit studies things to death, urged quick action.
50. More and more spaces will not solve the problem, there is a need to find alternative methods of getting to town and the lots.
51. Need to look at longer term viability, and the build and build solution will destroy the quality of life in Summit.
52. Spoke of mother who shops in New Providence as do other Summit residents.
53. NJ Transit controls the station and it is not pleasant to sit in and thus the City should make sure it retains control over the lot.
54. Spoke of experience in using shuttle bus from a lot to an office at the Newark airport emphasizing that employees must allow users to get to the service or there will be no reason for having the employee.
55. Petition presented from 12 Chestnut urging that the triangle remain a green open space with the comment that the residents agreed to parking next to the firehouse with keeping Chestnut open.

President Clark suggested and it was agreed as follows:

1. Meet with PAC on 4/5 at 8:30 a.m. in conference style.
2. Burkholder to have consultants provide input re design, revenues, time frames, etc.
3. Firehouse lot - City provide layout for parking spaces, # possible, cost, how quickly can be done and consider Trugman input.
4. Give consideration to very quickly going to the Planning Board, St. Teresa's, Trugman and all else in the immediate area so they know what the City is thinking.
5. Burkholder to secure a map of all lots, give # spaces and revenue from each lot and # meters on streets.

POSITION STATEMENT

SUMMIT 2005

DELIVERED BY ITS DOWNTOWN INITIATIVE

March 11, 1997

SUMMIT 2005 was originally an outgrowth of the combined forces of the City of Summit and Overlook Hospital. Recently incorporated and operating under its own aegis, *SUMMIT 2005* supports the endeavors of three vital initiatives in addition to the downtown effort. These initiatives are working assiduously with Mayor Long and with representatives of Common Council, the police and fire departments, the Chamber of Commerce and Summit Downtown Inc., youth and senior citizen groups, the Board of Education, the Junior League of Summit, citizen groups and the like to help create, or to enhance support for, improvement endeavors in Summit already under way by others.

Issues which have come before *SUMMIT 2005* in the last year have touched almost every aspect of life in Summit. I am here tonight, speaking through the Downtown Initiative, on behalf of *SUMMIT 2005* to address its position on parking which was voted upon at its last monthly meeting on February 21st.

The Downtown Initiative has been studying the vital issue of parking in the Central Retail Business District and in the periphery of the downtown since its beginning one and a half years ago. Coincidentally, four of the members of Mayor Long's recent Parking Advisory Committee sit on the Downtown Initiative and there is great appreciation within the 2005 Steering Committee for their hard work and for the dedication of all the Mayor's appointees who worked on this complex problem.

-more-

Public Parking Forum - March 11, 1997

Summit Middle School Cafeteria

I'm Tom Getzendanner. I live at the corner of Beechwood & Bellevue, on the north side of town, and commute daily to a job in Manhattan. So I don't own or operate a business here.

Nevertheless I have a lot at stake in our downtown. When we bought our home in 1979 over 30% of the municipal budget was funded by commercial and industrial taxpayers. Today the business sector comprises less than 20% of Summit's property base. This decline has shifted an extra \$900/yr real estate taxes onto my residence. So I care very much about the health of our CRBD.

I'm an economist by training, and wish the Citizens Advisory Panel paid more attention to mercantile realities and less to political feelings.

Our downtown grosses approximately \$100 million sales volume a year, which sounds like a big number - until you divide it up among 190 storefronts occupying 350,000 square feet of space.

This works out to \$286 per sq ft - not enough to cover rent, hire employees, pay taxes, and still turn a profit. Retailers in towns like ours typically gross more than \$300. The Short Hills Mall in fact generates \$500 sales volume per sq ft of its floor space.

Mayor Long has initiated many different growth strategies, including changes to the mix of goods/services we offer, landing another anchor store to replace Roots, extending business hours to accommodate modern lifestyles, and promoting a SummiTown charge card that rewards shoppers for spending locally.

But the single biggest variable by far is parking. National averages show that one sq ft of floor space can produce \$350 retail sales volume per year when supported by adequate infrastructure.

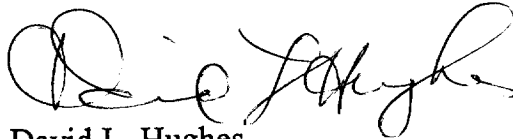
Our parking shortage runs 4 not 3 digits. The right order of magnitude is to realize Short Hills Mall has 6,200 spaces for a daytime workforce of 3,000 employees, leaving lots of room for customers. Summit on the other hand contains 2,400 employees and barely 2,600 spaces!

Parking is a critical element in an economic equation that should be gauged by whatever it takes for merchants to survive, not by objections from homeowners who spend less and less of their disposable personal income downtown.

6. Angelo to prepare detailed figures showing net income from parking and how figures were computed.
7. Try to determine (Steiner) # Summit commuters, # non-Summit commuters, and # employees that park.

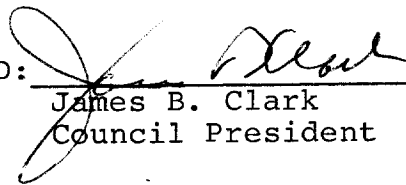
Meeting adjourned on motion of Councilmember Dill.

Respectfully submitted:



David L. Hughes
City Clerk

APPROVED: _____



James B. Clark
Council President