

Frequently Asked Questions
Nov. 13, 2023 Special Town Meeting Article 4
Municipal Parking
11/9/2023

What is this Article about?

This Article would authorize the Select Board to acquire a newly constructed parking lot, generally behind Town Hall, Bill's Pizza, and the Middlesex Savings Bank. If so authorized, the Board would issue a Request For Proposals to acquire a parking lot to enhance off-street parking availability for the downtown. The construction of the parking lot will entail collaboration on the design of the parking lot with the owners of Bill's Pizza. It will involve work on Town Hall and 6 Walcott St. property. The winning proponent will design, permit, and construct the parking lot. The Town would purchase the lot after completion. Currently, there are about 66 parking spaces in this area; after completion, there may be as many as 171 public parking spaces.

What would the Town be paying for?

The Town would pay for a fully designed and constructed parking lot, including redesigned/reconstructed parking on the Town Hall parcel and 6 Walcott St. The cost is \$2,975,000; \$10,000 is included for legal, engineering, recording, and other costs.

How would the Town fund this purchase?

It is proposed that the project be funded with Certified Free Cash.

Will the voters need to vote on this purchase at an election?

No.

What parcels are included in this Article?

- 10 Walcott Street (U16 143 0) - Owner: Christos Siarkos
- 14 Main Street (U16 151 0) - Owner: Baypath Plaza, LLC
- 0 Main Street (U16 153 4) - Owner: Christos Siarkos and Zacharias Siarkos
- 18 Main Street (U16 149 0) - Owner: Town of Hopkinton
- 6 Walcott Street (U16 144 0) - Owner: Town of Hopkinton

Some of the parcels referenced in the Article have buildings on them. What happens to them?

All existing privately owned buildings (Bill's Pizza and 10 Walcott Street) would remain and would not be sold to the Town. The new parking lot would be constructed on land already used for parking, plus adjacent undeveloped land on the lots referenced. A new lot would be carved out of this back area and conveyed to the Town after the parking lot is constructed.

Will 6 Walcott St. be demolished?

Not at this time. The building is used for the Parks & Recreation Commission offices. It is intended to remain as long as it is needed for municipal offices. However, under the Town Meeting Article, the existing gravel parking lot is anticipated to be expanded, paved, and connected to the parking area behind Town Hall.

How many parking spaces will be constructed if this Article passes?

There are currently 66 parking spaces in the area behind #6, #10, #14, and # 18 Main St. The conceptual plan for the new parking area shows 189 parking spaces in total and includes 6 Walcott St., which is not connected to the existing lot at this time. The winning proponent will refine and submit the conceptual design to the Planning Board for Site Plan Approval. The Planning Board will approve the number of spaces and final design (including landscaping, lighting and buffers).

Where will there be exits/entrances into/out of the parking lot?

The conceptual plan shows the existing one-way entrance and exit onto Main St., along with an entrance onto Walcott St. and Claffin St. The final design is subject to Planning Board approval.

Does the plan include the property at 6 Main St. (Acacia Club/Masonic Lodge)?

No. Although the parking spaces behind this building are adjacent to the existing and proposed parking lot and use the same entrance and exit, they are not part of the new parking lot plan. The new lot would match the existing parking spaces behind 6 Main St.

Would the Town build the new parking lot?

No. The Town would purchase the parking lot after it is constructed.

Why does the Town need this parking lot? Can't people park there now?

Other than the few spaces behind Town Hall and at 6 Walcott St., the rest of the parking spaces are privately owned. It may only be used for businesses as indicated on the posted signs. Violators are subject to towing, as noted on the signs.

Why do we need more parking downtown?

Like many Massachusetts town centers, Hopkinton's downtown comprises small lots developed initially before there were automobiles and zoning regulations. Shared parking makes downtowns, as a compact commercial center, work. The opposite is commercial strip development, like what we see along parts of Route 9. Hopkinton has crafted its zoning regulations to allow for enhanced commercial development downtown by reducing parking requirements as applied to other commercial areas in Hopkinton, allowing credit for on-street spaces and shared parking. The intent is to preserve the downtown and allow for increased vitality. But to make it work, more shared parking that is available to the general public is needed. Consider how many businesses are in multiple-tenant buildings or small lots with little or no parking on site. Although some businesses are fortunate to have large parking lots,

these private parking lots are not available to non-patrons. The private parking model does not allow for parking in one central location while visiting multiple businesses - one must drive from one location to the next.

Why do we need this parking if Town Hall will move out of downtown?

An overall planning effort for municipal facilities is underway by the Permanent Building Committee. The Permanent Building Committee is still determining if the Town will relocate all or some Town Hall functions in the future. Regardless of the Town Hall location, there would continue to be a need for shared public municipal parking downtown for the library, Town Common events, and downtown businesses.

Where are the existing municipal parking areas downtown?

In addition to on-street parking spaces, the following parking areas are owned by the Town:

- Spaces in front of the Police Station;
- Parking lot behind 25 and 35 Main Street;
- Hopkinton Public Library;
- Hopkinton Town Hall;
- 6 Walcott St., Parks & Rec. Dept.;
- Center School.

In addition, the Town has an agreement with St. John's Church to use several spaces there (20 Church St.).

Why now?

- The need is now - the project will support growing the commercial tax base in the downtown. Existing businesses and owners of vacant buildings downtown collectively identify additional parking as a present and immediate need.
- Willing partner - the owner of the property adjacent to the town hall is a willing partner in implementing a parking solution downtown.
- Funding is available via Free Cash.

Why is funding a shared public parking lot in the public interest?

- Providing shared public parking downtown is consistent with the Town's Master Plan goals. It aligns with previous town meeting votes supporting town investments in public parking. The Town purchased 6 Walcott, 25, and 35 Main Street, constructed six parking spaces at the Police Station, and is leasing parking spaces at St John's.
- This shared public parking lot will support adding accessible parking along Main Street, including allowing for accessible parking spaces along Main Street and at the Common. Parking spaces at the proposed shared public parking lot will offset single parking spaces converted to accessible parking along Main Street and the Common.
- The project will support the Town's reduced parking requirements downtown public policy.
- The Town is concerned about the possible effects of the lack of convenient parking spaces on property values, the vitality of our downtown, and its desirability as a

destination for businesses, locals, and visitors. From that perspective, its success in retaining existing businesses and attracting new businesses to the downtown hinges on the Town's success in addressing the parking demand.

- The Town's goal of growing the commercial tax base comes into play. Vacant commercial buildings in the downtown area represent depreciation of property values. A decrease in property values equals a decrease in taxes. However, the residents of the Town still need to fund town services downtown. Thus, providing off-street parking increases the land values of lots supported by public parking.
- Environmental benefit: providing a destination public parking lot reduces the number of vehicles driving around looking for parking.
- Efficient Land Use Pattern: Downtown lots in Hopkinton are small. Providing public parking would free up some land for business expansion.
- Community building and engagement: a municipal parking lot in the downtown area would support the Town's investments in the library, town hall, and Main Street while furthering the Town's civic participation and engagement goals.
- Put together, providing a municipal parking lot downtown is in the public interest and serves a public purpose.

Is there an alternative to paving the parking lot?

Yes, the town may consider a permeable pavement.