

11/29 (10)

John Murray

From: Dore' Hunter
Sent: Wednesday, November 24, 2004 10:12 AM
To: Manager Department
Cc: Allan.Fierce@state.ma.us; Board of Selectmen; Pamela.Resor@state.ma.us
Subject: Re: Commuter rail parking; Jones Field

Don,

Please once again put the Jones Field parking situation on the Agenda for the 11/29 BOS meeting. If the staff is not yet ready to offer a new parking/traffic order for the site we might discuss the stream of comments offered by this gentleman from Stow (see the forwarded message).

Depending on what the Board wishes to do about continued commuter parking at or near the Jones Field and Playground, it may be that the question as to why any non-playground/field use parking there is not subject to the same fee as at the station may arise. I would therefore appreciate it if you would have at hand what the cost might be for installing parking meters and/or signage concerning restriction to Acton resident parking, with allotments similar to what we may next decide/reaffirm about station parking lot.

I would also think it appropriate to think about signage prohibiting pedestrian traffic along the railroad right of way between Jones Field and the station.

Regards,
Dore' Hunter
Selectman, Town of Acton, MA
Tel: 978-263-0882
Fax: 978-263-9230
Email: DoreHunter@aol.com

11/24/2004

John Murray

From: Fierce, Allan (LSP) [Allan.Fierce@state.ma.us]
Sent: Wednesday, November 24, 2004 9:55 AM
To: Dore' Hunter
Cc: Manager Department; Board of Selectmen; Resor, Pamela (SEN)
Subject: RE: Commuter rail parking; Jones Field

Dore',

More than "some" parking is now prohibited along the Stow Street edge of Jones Field. ALL parking there is prohibited! Each telephone pole along the field on Stow Street has a placard that says parking is prohibited. When I arrived at about 8:10 this morning, an Acton police car was parked there, along Stow Street to the NE of the metal bleachers. The officer in the car was preventing vehicles from parking ANYWHERE along Stow Street, not just on the Martin Street side of the bleachers. I spoke with him to confirm this. Again, there were a few vehicles parked behind him on Stow Street, just opposite the right field corner of the ball field, and he confirmed that they were parking in a prohibited area but had arrived and parked there before he arrived. (He is apparently not ordering these cars to be towed.) He said that there had been a no-parking placard right where those vehicles had parked, but it had been torn down and tossed down the brook embankment.

I told the officer this morning that I had an e-mail from you suggesting that the prohibited parking area was only on the Martin Street side of the grandstand, and he stated that this was not the understanding the police have about what the Selectmen have ordered on a temporary basis, until a final parking policy can be arrived at. He also agreed with me that it made no sense to prohibit parking along the Stow Street side of the field in response to a complaint from a resident on Martin Street, and he said he would have no problem if commuters were ultimately allowed to park there, so long as they didn't stick out into the street.

I am astounded that you and the police are not on the same page about where parking is to be prohibited temporarily along Stow Street. I thought the Selectmen were supposed to be in charge.

In any event, the right thing to do – NOW – is to direct the police, loudly and clearly, to allow parking along the Stow Street side of Jones Field. The area near the hydrant should be clearly marked as a no parking area, to the proper distance away required by law. And anyone parking there should be towed. But to prohibit all parking on the Martin Street side of the bleachers is overkill. Now that we are past the baseball season, and no teams are playing baseball there in the evening, there is no longer a need for emergency vehicles to access the field through the fence-opening there. Any reasonable attempt to balance the needs of field-users with those of commuters would suggest that the parking spaces adjacent to the fence-opening should be available for parking in the off-season. Let's face it. We need every safe, legal space that's available. At least two vehicles should be able to park legally on the Martin Street side of the bleachers without violating the legal distance required from the hydrant.

I am also disappointed that you seem to be so pessimistic about achieving a larger solution. I remain willing to work with you and the Acton Selectmen to start a push with area towns and legislators for MBTA or state funding for a larger parking lot at the South Acton station as well as a Regional Train Station in Littleton.

Happy Thanksgiving.

Allan Fierce
284 Red Acre Road
Stow, MA 01775
(H) 978-897-1786
(O) 617-574-6870

-----Original Message-----

From: DoreHunter@aol.com [mailto:DoreHunter@aol.com]

11/24/2004

Sent: Tuesday, November 23, 2004 11:49 AM
To: Fierce, Allan (DEP)
Cc: manager@acton-ma.gov; bos@acton-ma.gov; Resor, Pamela (SEN)
Subject: Re: Commuter rail parking; Jones Field

Alan,

I have read your message on my return from looking at the Jones Field situation today at 1055 hours.

You are indeed correct that some parking is now prohibited on the Stow Street edge of the field. I misremembered that when I was sitting at home last night responding to your letter. The prohibited area is on the Martin Street side of the grandstand, and in effect keeps parked vehicles from obstructing the fire hydrant (as was the situation last Thursday) and also would allow an emergency vehicle to drive onto the field if necessary. There were 10 cars parked today along the Stow Street edge of the field on the Main Street side of the small grandstand. I believe that is the same number that were parked there yesterday.

There were only 19 vacant spaces behind the Fire Station today, so apparently several other commuters parked there along with yourself.

There were 28 vehicles parked along the Martin Street edge of Jones Field today in permitted spaces.

Two adults with children were using the playground with their cars properly parked, two commuter vehicles were improperly parked in the spaces marked for playground use only. One of those two improperly parked cars, was driven by a young lady who got back into her car and moved it into a permitted space when she saw me counting cars. She then walked down the tracks toward the station just in advance of the 1102 hours train from Fitchburg. Given the pressure that the Federal government is putting on governments responsible for rail crossings to physically prevent inadvertent access across tracks in the path of trains, it is disturbing to see the track area used as a path, even in broad daylight.

There again today were no cars parked in the no parking zone beside the Conservation area and beyond.

The Acton Town government has and is now indeed looking for practical ways and means to provide more parking for the South Acton station. It is unfortunate that the hoped for Regional Train Station in or around Littleton, with access off Routes I-495 and 2 has not been able to be created to absorb the pressure from commuters living West of Acton - a situation which is out of our control.

Regards,
Dore' Hunter
Selectman, Town of Acton, MA
Tel: 978-263-0882
Fax: 978-263-9230
Email: DoreHunter@aol.com

11/24/2004

John Murray

From: Fierce, Allan (LSP) [Allan.Fierce@state.ma.us]
Sent: Tuesday, November 23, 2004 11:25 AM
To: Dore' Hunter
Cc: Resor, Pamela (SEN); Manager Department; Board of Selectmen
Subject: RE: Commuter rail parking; Jones Field

Dear Mr. Hunter:

Thank you for your thoughtful response. I do have a few further thoughts and suggestions.

First, I can assure you that the Acton police have indeed placed placards prohibiting parking along the Stow Street boundary with Jones Field, i.e., adjacent to the first-base side of the ball field. Yesterday, I did not notice the placards at first, and when I attempted to parallel park there (in a space by the metal bleachers adjacent to the ball field), the driver of a Town of Acton emergency vehicle (SUV) stationed there used his bullhorn to order me not to park there. This morning, when I arrived early for the the 7:18 express and parked (as still permitted) along the Martin Street (third base) side, I noticed an Acton police cruiser parked along the Stow Street (first base) side of Jones Field. He, too, was prohibiting vehicles from parking adjacent to the field along the Stow Street side. I noticed that a few vehicles were parked behind his cruiser along Stow Street in the spaces adjacent to the field furthest to the NE (closest to the station), and I asked the officer about these vehicles when I walked by. He said that they had arrived and parked before he got there and that those were not permitted spaces.

Perhaps there has been some miscommunication between the Acton Selectmen and the police, and the police have misinterpreted the directions you gave after your last Selectmen's meeting by extending the parking ban you ordered into an area you did not intend -- the spaces along and adjacent to the Stow Street side of Jones Field. I hope so. There is no reason why those spaces should not continue to be available. They are not near any residences (there is a farm field across the street). As long as humongous SUVs and pick-ups can be directed to park so that they do not "stick out" into the street, there is no safety issue. My suggestion there (mentioned yesterday) is to order parallel parking only on the Stow Street side of the field. It makes no sense, in response to a complaint from a resident up Martin Street, to continue to allow commuter parking along the Martin Street side of the field but to ban it along the Stow Street side, much further away.

I hope that you will request that the police allow commuters to parallel park along the Stow Street side of Jones Field. (No one objects to prohibiting parking on the other side of Stow Street, opposite the field, as there is no room to park there anyway.) Returning these additional Stow Street field-side spaces to the commuters will make a significant difference.

Having parked behind the South Acton Fire Station yesterday, I can only reiterate that it is VERY inconvenient for commuters, like me, who come from the west side of Route 27, for the reasons I expressed yesterday. It is also MUCH FURTHER from the train station than Jones Field -- perhaps twice as far. I'll bet you a cup of expensive coffee that very few train commuters from the west of Rt. 27 will end up using it. Yesterday, despite the fact that approximately 25 formerly used spaces had been eliminated near Jones Field, there were only about five cars parked there, and I'm sure some of those were not displaced Jones Field parkers like me but were "regulars" who parked there routinely. That location will not serve as a reasonable alternative for most displaced Jones Field parkers, who will end up adding to the traffic congestion in the area as they seek a more viable alternative at another train station or by driving to Boston.

You mentioned that there had been some discussion about attempting to arrange for additional parking "at a local business area." I am interested enough in this idea to ask where that area would be. Perhaps there are some areas that would be satisfactory, if they are closer to the train station than the Fire Station.

As for the longer term solution (a larger commuter rail parking lot for Acton), I understand that unmet parking needs are a common situation throughout the commuter rail system. But that only means that there is a larger political constituency that can be organized and energized to support some sort of state or MBTA funding to

11/24/2004

build more commuter parking throughout the area. Why can't we work toward that end? I'm not asking Acton to pay for putting a second level up. All I'm asking from Acton is some leadership in working with other communities, Senator Resor, and other area legislators to craft a solution to this pressing common problem. Let's do it!

Allan Fierce
284 Red Acre Road
Stow, MA 01775
(H) 978-897-1786
(O) 617-574-6870

-----Original Message-----

From: DoreHunter@aol.com [mailto:DoreHunter@aol.com]
Sent: Monday, November 22, 2004 8:37 PM
To: Fierce, Allan (DEP)
Cc: Resor, Pamela (SEN); manager@acton-ma.gov; bos@acton-ma.gov
Subject: Re: Commuter rail parking; Jones Field

Alan,

I have read your letter and am aware and fully understand what the parking situation is that you are complaining about.

But I do not understand your comments about the temporary prohibition posted today along the Stow Street side of Jones Field. I inspected the parking situation around the field myself today at 3:15 p.m. and, as I recall, the only no parking sign I saw on Stow Street was just past the NE quadrant of the Stow/Martin intersection on the East side (opposite the field) side of the road. There was also a sign on Martin Street just South East of the Stow Street intersection (where I photographed a car poorly parked last Thursday), and there were temporary no parking signs on Martin Street on the North West side beyond the Jones Field boundary, along the Conservation Land and leading up toward the railroad crossing, where the residents have complained about hazardous parking. I do not recall seeing any no parking signs along the Stow Street boundary of Jones Field, and today did observe cars parked there. Unlike last Thursday and Friday, when I also observed the parking, this afternoon there were no commuter cars parked along the edge of Martin Street where the signs were previously erected to specifically reserve a few spaces for day time users of the playground.

The total number of cars I counted along the two sides of Jones Field today at 3:15 p.m. were 39, somewhat less than the Thursday and Friday numbers.

At the last meeting of the Acton Board of Selectmen, in response to a complaint from a Martin Street resident about unsafe parking and the hazards to pedestrians, particularly during the hours of darkness, the Board directed the Acton Town Manager to have the police put up temporary no parking signs while the staff and the Board consider some sort of a permanent traffic regulation.

The Acton Board of Selectmen is VERY AWARE of the commuter parking situation. We fairly regularly receive complaints from Acton residents who have paid for an annual sticker which would allow them to park in the station parking lot who cannot find a parking place there. The complaints usually mention the number of spaces in the lot in which out of town residents are allowed to pay and park. We are acutely aware that Acton has built one of the largest, if not the largest, parking lots along the commuter line and also draws more out of town resident parkers, due to the end of the double tracking at Acton and the configuration of the train schedule to our West.

I am Acton's representative to the MBTA Advisory Board and was, until I retired, a regular rail commuter. I have previously explored the possibility of further funding for additional Acton parking, there does not seem to be any funds available, certainly not Town funds. There is in any event no room to expand the current surface lot, a structured addition, i.e. a deck, would be quite expensive and there is opposition to erecting such a structure in view of our South Acton Historic District.

11/24/2004

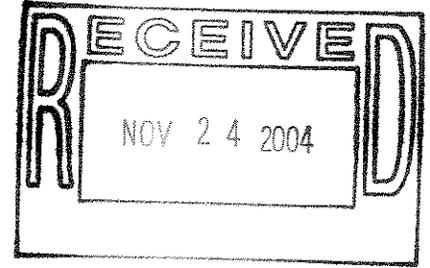
It is unfortunate that you find the free parking spaces behind the South Acton Fire Station inconvenient. Those free spaces are often empty when the station lot and the free parking area that we have tolerated around the edge of Jones Field are full. There has been some discussion about attempting to arrange further parking at a local business area, but from your comments I judge you would find that as unsatisfactory as the area behind the Fire Station.

It is indeed unfortunate that the MBTA ridership is limited by lack of station parking spaces. I understand that such is a common situation throughout the commuter rail system and thus in part defeats the usefulness of the system. I fear that situation is beyond the control of the Acton municipal government. Nevertheless if you have any further constructive suggestions we would be delighted to entertain them.

Regards,
F. Dore' Hunter, Esq.
Chairman, Board of Selectman, Town of Acton, MA
Tel: 978-263-0882
Fax: 978-263-9230
Email: DoreHunter@aol.com

11/24/2004

284 Red Acre Road
Stow, MA 01775
(H) 978-897-1786
(O) 617-574-6870



November 22, 2004

BY E-MAIL AND REGULAR MAIL

Board of Selectmen
Town of Acton
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720

Re: Commuter rail parking; Jones Field

Dear Board of Selectmen:

My wife and I are Stow residents who live just over a mile from the South Acton commuter rail station, and we ride the train to Boston and back every weekday. For years, because the Acton commuter rail parking lot is full for non-residents when we arrive, we have parked our Honda Civic at Jones Field, usually along the right field line (Stow Street), but occasionally along the left field line (Martin Street). This morning, I was surprised and dismayed to see placards posted by the Town of Acton prohibiting parking anywhere along Stow Street. Oddly, along the Martin Street side of the field, commuters were allowed to park, but by the time I arrived all of those spaces were taken. Placards prohibited parking further up Martin Street, past the Jones Field playground area, where some cars had been parking on busy days.

I am writing you to respectfully request that you not eliminate all these parking spaces and to request a meeting with you to discuss how the needs of train commuters, residents, Jones Field users, and through traffic can all best be accommodated.

I realize that as a resident of Stow, I am very unlikely to be given the kind of attention you would give to an Acton resident. All I can say are (1) the Town of Acton undoubtedly eliminated spaces today that have been and will be used in the future by Acton residents as well as by those of us from other towns and (2) I would hope to appeal to your neighborliness and your shared concern about some of the larger issues at stake – reducing traffic congestion, promoting public transportation over use of private vehicles, and reducing auto emissions to achieve cleaner air.

I acknowledge that over the past year, there has been a significant spike in the number of vehicles parking daily in the Jones Field area. Perhaps this has to do with the addition of a new “express” train to Boston at 7:37 a.m. These additional vehicles have really filled up the area. Whereas in

the past the Stow Street section would often be filled but the Martin Street side would not, now both areas are completely full on most days. Along the Martin Street side, vehicles have even begun to park to the north of Jones Field – over the brook and up near the residences to the north.

I also acknowledge that some of these vehicles are large SUVs and pick-ups that, when parked diagonally or straight-in along the Stow Street section of the field, occasionally stick out into Stow Street a foot or two, and this could be hazardous to through traffic.

I also understand that you have received some complaints about all these vehicles, and if I were in your shoes I would be concerned, too. But I would not over-react by banning all parking on the Stow Street side of Jones field and everywhere else in the area except along the third base and left field sides of the field. That would be completely unreasonable as a response to the situation.

The placards posted today eliminated perhaps 15-18 spaces along Stow Street and perhaps another 10 past the playground on the Martin Street side – a total of at least 25 spaces.

If anything, the area needs more spaces, not less.

It is not a satisfactory solution to direct all these vehicles over to the parking lot behind the Fire Station on School Street. To get there during the morning rush hour traffic, someone like me, coming from west of Route 27, must get on Central Street and traverse the already overly congested Central Street/Rt. 27 intersection, then cut immediately into the far left lane to be positioned to make the left turn onto School Street at the stop light there. This additional traffic through these two intersections worsens congestion there – something that should be avoided if possible. Once one has parked behind the Fire Station, one then has about a 10-12 minute walk back to the train station. For commuters traveling to the train station from west of Route 27, parking at the Fire Station rather than at Jones Field adds about 20 minutes to the commute. When I add this to the hour and fifteen minutes it already takes me to get to work, this additional time is a killer. A better solution is needed for those of us (Acton and non-Acton residents alike) who reside west of Route 27.

There is, of course, both a longer-term and a short-term problem. In the long run (the next few years), Acton needs to significantly expand the commuter rail lot, probably by building at least a second level above the existing lot. I am hopeful that we can enlist support from area legislators to obtain MBTA and/or state funding to assist Acton in constructing this needed expansion. If it takes an increase in the commuter rail fares from South Action to Boston to do this, or even increased state taxes, I'd support it, and I'm certain many other Jones Field-parkers would, too.

As for the short-run, Acton needs to better regulate the parking at Jones Field while allowing a reasonable number of vehicles to park there, including along the right field (Stow Street) side, where there are no residences nearby. There are many ways to do this, and this is what I would

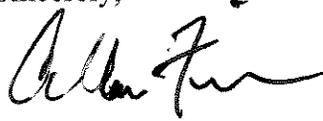
November 22, 2004

like to meet with you to discuss. One idea would be to pave and mark parallel (not straight-in) spaces along the right field (Stow Street) side, perhaps with the addition of meters, to ensure that vehicles would not stick out into Stow Street and impede traffic.

I know how easy it would be for you to simple eliminate all parking around Jones Field and to say to those of us who live in neighboring towns: "Fagedaboutit." I know, however, that there is a better solution, and that Acton is not the kind of town that will bury its head in the sand rather than face and address regional concerns.

I am happy to meet with you at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allan Fierce". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A" and a long, sweeping tail.

Allan Fierce

cc: Don Johnson, Town Manager
Senator Pam Resor