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**PARKING IN DOWNTOWN AMHERST
An Historical Summary**

1961

March Town Meeting appropriates \$8,000 to enlarge and reconstruct the parking lot at the north end of the Town Common.

July As part of street reconstruction (including the removal of the last trolley tracks), the parking lot at the north end of the Town Common is rebuilt.

1966

March Town Meeting appropriates \$4,000 to construct a public parking lot on Town-owned land on Pray Street.

1967

March Town Meeting votes to demolish the Amity Street School and use the site as a parking lot until another use is found. A deed restriction requires some educational purpose in future uses.

1968

March Town Meeting appropriates \$3,000 to construct a parking lot on the Amity School site.

1969

June The Central Business District Study prepared by Charles E. Downe as part of the Comprehensive Plan Report is submitted. It contains specific recommendations about redesigning the circulation and layout of downtown and associated parking.

1970

March As part of early Boltwood Walk planning, Annual Town Meeting appropriates \$8,000 to demolish the elementary schools on Kellogg Avenue. The premises are to be used for parking until some other disposition is made.

1973

January The Final Project Report of the Amherst Redevelopment Authority outlines the redevelopment plan for Boltwood Walk, including parking.

January The Final Report of the Select Committee On Goals for Amherst (SCOG) is completed and submitted. It recommends creating new parking areas and garages downtown.

1976

The Amherst Local Growth Policy Committee (part of a state-wide planning effort) completes an extensive questionnaire distributed by the Office of State Planning. It emphasizes the importance of the Town Center and recommends expanded off-street parking and an associated shuttle service.

1977

Draft - A Parking Study by L.N. Wershale is completed and submitted. It includes extensive recommendations for the improvement of downtown parking, including better signs, separate employee parking, increased meter rates and expanding the supply of parking.

The Chamber of Commerce publishes Proposals to Enhance Economic Development in Amherst Town Center. It identifies limited parking facilities as a downtown liability, and recommends peripheral lots connected to downtown by a trolley system.

The Parking Report prepared by the Office of the Town Planner is completed and submitted. It includes extensive recommendations for parking improvements, including better signs, new parking lots, a parking deck structure in the Louis' Foods (now CVS) parking lot, more compact spaces, separate employee/resident parking, adjusted meter periods, improved parking enforcement and shared private/public lots.

1978

The Chamber of Commerce completes and submits Parking in the Central Business District. It recommends better signs, adjusting meter periods, directing all-day parkers to specific lots, and expanding the supply of parking, including long-term off-street parking for shoppers.

The Amherst Redevelopment Authority completes and submits its Feasibility Report for Amherst Parking Structure. It recommends building a multi-level parking structure in one of two downtown locations—behind the Post Office (immediately north of Kellogg Avenue and Boltwood Walk) and at the corner of Amity and South Prospect Streets.

1979

May The Annual Town Meeting votes to ask the Select Board to establish an ad hoc committee to study downtown parking and submit a final report by January 1, 1980.

October The Preliminary Report of the Amherst Parking Study Committee (Klein Report) is completed and submitted. It recommends consolidating responsibility for administering the parking system (in a new position in the Police Department), better promotion of existing parking, metering on-street parking spaces on streets near the downtown, completing meter installations previously recommended, increasing meter rates and expanding parking in selected areas.

1980

First Annual Update of the Overall Economic Development Program (OEDP) Plan is completed and submitted. It recommends the development of a new off-street parking facility and/or expanding the number of existing parking spaces.

August Draft - Amherst Parking Garage Feasibility Report, prepared by Richard Goldman is completed. It concludes that a parking garage is feasible and can be built to fit in with the character of the downtown.

1984

June The Select Board appoints a Town Center Task Force to collect data and analyze information concerning the downtown, and make recommendations for short- and long-term actions.

October The Town Center Task Force Final Report is completed and submitted. It includes several parking recommendations, including removing a prohibition on the rental of surplus downtown land as parking, and requiring payments-in-lieu of parking spaces for new construction within the Municipal Parking Zone. It requests action on the parking recommendations of the Klein Report (October 1979) and asks the Town to "proceed with all deliberate speed to plan and construct central parking structure(s) in the CBD."

October Town Meeting votes to authorize eminent domain acquisition of the former Louis' Foods (now CVS) parking lot and portions of adjacent properties and entryways, exclusive of buildings, and appropriates \$825,000 for that purpose. This ensures Town control of the parking lot and allows for a possible future parking structure on the site.

1985

August The Redevelopment Authority holds a series of meetings soliciting public input on the best use of the remaining undeveloped parcel (C-3) in the urban renewal area, currently used for loosely organized parking.

1986

May The Downtown Subcommittee of the Planning Board issues a report, Downtown Parking Facilities, on the need for additional parking and an off-street parking facility.

July A Select Board response to a new proposal from the Amherst Redevelopment Authority for redevelopment of the final portion of the Boltwood Walk project includes its concern that new uses in the area might increase parking needs.

August The Amherst Redevelopment Authority votes to donate \$5,000 to the Town to assist with the cost of a parking consultant to help resolve the location of a future downtown parking facility.

October The Select Board appoints a Parking Task Force to recommend suitable sites for a parking garage, along with a preliminary design and financing mechanisms.

1987

April Town Meeting appropriates \$50,000 for a downtown parking garage study to support the work of the Parking Task Force.

1988

January Arrowstreet Inc. of Cambridge is hired to undertake the downtown off-street parking facilities study under the direction of the Parking Task Force.

December Parking Task Force holds a planning "charette" at the Bangs Community Center, soliciting citizen discussion and review of major off-street parking sites as well as other parking problems and solutions.

1989

January Arrowstreet Inc. issues Phase I Report - Parking Facilities Study analyzing three possible downtown parking facility sites--Boltwood Walk, the CVS lot, and the lots at the corner of Amity and South Prospect Streets.

June The Town purchases the northern 2/3's of the parking lot behind CVS (former Louis' Foods).

1990

January The Parking Task Force and Arrowstreet complete and issue their final Parking Facilities Report, recommending the CVS lot as the preferred parking garage site and including a preliminary design and cost estimate (\$2.8 million). It also recommends short-term improvements to the parking meter system and existing parking regulations. The Select Board votes to authorize the Parking Task Force to proceed with preliminary designs on the CVS lot and asks the Town Manager to explore ways to develop improved parking at the Amity Street site.

August The Parking Task Force issues its final report, Recommendations on the Metering System in Amherst, which recommends specific changes in the existing parking meter system.

1991

September The Town/Commercial Relations Committee (TCRC), Planning Board and Chamber of Commerce sponsor a day-long Downtown Forum, attended by over 120 community leaders and citizens. The Forum considers downtown strengths and weaknesses, and future goals. Parking is one of the principal topics of concern.

1992

February Six Downtown Task Forces formed at the Sept. 1991 Downtown Forum, having investigated areas of concern in detail, submit their reports and action recommendations to the Town Commercial Relations Committee (TCRC), which compiles them into a single document.

March A second Downtown Forum is held, at which the recommendations of the Downtown Task Forces are reviewed and consensus is sought on the most important actions to pursue.

July The TCRC presents a completed Downtown Action Plan to the Select Board, which votes to accept the Plan. Among its parking recommendations are: better signs, consolidating administration of the parking meter system under one authority, reorganizing meter periods and rates, visually indicating meter periods on meters, creating new parking/delivery regulations, investigating the feasibility of restriping parking spaces, initiating joint public/private arrangements to provide separate employee parking, installing central control mechanisms for large lots, completing the eminent domain acquisition of the CVS lot parking areas and entryways, incorporating meter system improvements into the Town's capital budget plan, undertaking a full parking demand study of the downtown area and proceeding with active planning (financing and design) for the development of a downtown parking garage on the CVS lot.

1993

August Select Board appoints a Parking Commission to oversee the parking system. The Town Engineer is assigned as staff support for the Commission.

At the Parking Commission's request, the Select Board declares selected free parking periods to support summer-time business activity downtown. Parking enforcement is increased.

1994

February Parking meters in most off-street lots are changed from 1 hour to 2 hours, to allow for longer shopping and dining periods. Many on-street meters are replaced.

June Town Meeting appropriates \$25,000 for purchase and installation of a central parking meter machine for the Town's portion of the CVS lot.

1995

January A central meter machine is installed in the Town's portion of the lot behind CVS.

The Parking Commission begins work on a parking permit system for downtown employers, employees and residents.

May Parking Commission makes several recommendations to increase on-street parking downtown, to better accommodate large events in Town. The centerline and shoulder of Main Street are relocated to allow street-side parking between Churchill Street and the Dickinson Homestead.

September Downtown Wayfinding Sign System (CDBG grant-funded handicapped accessible signs for the downtown) are installed, including signs directing drivers to public parking lots.

1996

During the summer, state Senator Stan Rosenberg, Chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, places \$3,000,000 in a state transportation bond for Off-Street Parking funds for a future Amherst parking garage.

Fall Special Town Meeting appropriates \$15,000 to update old parking garage plans.

After seven separate public meetings on the issue, and a petition proposal for a smaller garage at that site, the Boltwood Walk site is selected. The architectural firm of Meyer and Meyer is hired by the Town to review designs by Arrowstreet, Inc. and local architect Peter Kitchell for multi-level garage structures, and to develop a compromise design.

1997

May The preliminary Meyer and Meyer plan is presented to and endorsed by the Select Board, which appoints a Parking Garage Building Committee.

November The Fall Special Town Meeting acts on several articles concerning competing designs for a parking garage—a “Boltwood Place” design by Meyer and Meyer for a three-level garage (underground, ground level and above ground), as approved by the Parking Garage Building Committee and a "Pro Bono" design by architect Peter Kitchell for one underground and one ground level. Town Meeting approves a compromise design for a two-level garage (underground and ground level), with central pedestrian space and structural capacity for future expansion upward of one additional above-ground level.

The Select Board appoints a new Parking Garage Building committee.

1998

February A voter referendum effort seeking to overturn the decision of Town Meeting fails.

April A petition article on the Annual Town Meeting warrant seeking to rescind the vote of the 1997 Fall Town Meeting on the garage or delay its implementation is defeated.

The new Parking Garage Building Committee selects a design team (Wallace Floyd Associates) for the Boltwood Walk parking garage and a contract is signed.

The Town applies for and is awarded an Off-Street Parking grant for \$3,000,000. The Parking Garage Building Committee works with the design team to refine the parking garage design.

The Parking Commission continues to work on refining the downtown parking system of which the garage would be a part.

1999

May Annual Town Meeting again defeats (51 for, 124 against) a petition article to stop construction of the garage, as well as efforts by architect Peter Kitchell, Co-Chair of the Parking Garage Building Committee, to convince Town Meeting to substitute an alternative design (his own) for the one which the Committee had developed and approved.

Town Meeting declines to support a request for an additional \$300,000 to reinforce the surface deck. After meeting with the Select Board, the ARA and the Finance Committee, the Parking Garage Building Committee confirms an earlier vote to sacrifice parking spaces in order to fund surface deck reinforcement and additional surface amenities.

At the recommendation of the Parking Commission, several new commercial loading zones are created.

July The Parking Commission begins a series of public hearings on a new Town Center parking permit system for side streets adjacent to the downtown.

October On October 6, the Planning Board grants Site Plan Review approval for the Boltwood Walk parking garage.

2000

Despite six Town Meeting votes and a Town-wide voter referendum in favor of the parking garage, opponents filed three lawsuits in an attempt to stop construction.

For a variety of reasons, the first set of garage construction bids received exceeds the appropriated funds by \$600,000. Among them may have been the third lawsuit, which named all known and potential bidders as defendants. One judge dismisses a challenge to the Town's right to acquire easements at the project site. Another judge dismisses by other plaintiffs seeking to halt construction, allowing the project to proceed.

The Parking Garage Building Committee works with the architect to pare down the garage design for rebidding.

April Annual Town Meeting establishes a Transportation Enterprise Fund to pay for management of the parking system, including the garage, and to help fund public transit and other alternatives to downtown car traffic.

October The Select Board formally adopts the Town Center parking permit system.

2001

February A Special Town Meeting appropriates an additional \$1 million for the parking garage project.

March Massachusetts Land Court denies garage opponents' request for a preliminary injunction to halt construction while their appeal of the Planning Board Site Plan Review approval is pending.

Aquadro & Cerruti of Northampton sign a contract to build the Boltwood Walk parking garage for \$4.04 million. The total project cost is \$5 million, which includes a contingency of \$119,495, \$448,860 for design work, and \$330,000 for acquiring land and easements.

April Groundbreaking for the parking garage is held April 2.

2002

Garage construction proceeds. The Parking Garage Committee tours the partially completed underground level of the structure.

2003

The Boltwood Walk parking garage officially opens. Twenty-five (25) spaces in the lower level are leased to nearby businesses and residents.

The Parking Commission considered parking hours and rates throughout the downtown. Off-street parking hours are changed, with the CVS lot extending from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., and the Boltwood Walk garage hours being shortened from 11 p.m. to 8 p.m.

2004

2005

2006

September The Town/Commercial Relations Committee recommends creating a period of free parking downtown prior to the winter holidays, to help support downtown shopping. On the first Saturday of December, on-street meters would be bagged. Beginning the second Saturday of December and continuing for nine (9) days, parking in off-street public lots would be free. The Select Board voted unanimously to accept the recommendation.

2007

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) is hired to conduct a study and analysis of downtown parking.

2008

April The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission submits its report on downtown parking. The report concludes that “the current parking supply in the downtown area of Amherst sufficiently meets the current parking demand”—meaning total supply meets total demand—but also notes that parking demand is localized around specific downtown destinations in the southern end of the downtown. Available public parking supply near those destinations is significantly over-burdened, regularly exceeding legal occupancy. The report indicates that the mostly private parking lots in the north end of the downtown are not located near the most desired downtown destinations, and are regularly under-utilized. The study makes several recommendations regarding the creation of public-private parking arrangements, improvements to parking signage, and public outreach intended to make citizens more aware of available under-utilized parking distant from destinations. It recommends increased enforcement of existing prohibitions on meter-feeding, and the use of “overflow signs” directing drivers attempting to park in over-burdened public lots to underutilized, more distant lots during peak times.

The Town Manager appoint an ad hoc Parking Task Force composed of staff and selected citizens to advise him on implementation of downtown parking recommendations.

2009

The Parking Task Force issues its recommendations about priorities in implementing

parking recommendations. The Select Board endorses the Task Force's recommendation to increase enforcement of the regulations against meter-feeding.

July

A design for improvement of the parking lot in the Town Common where Spring Street passes through the common is brought before a joint meeting of the Design Review Board and Historical Commission. The proposed design strongly resembles the conceptual design proposed for the parking lot as part of the 1986 Town Common Master Plan by Conway Design Associates.

2010

The Town pursued designs for improvements to the parking lot where Spring Street passes through the Town Common and associated sidewalk areas on the Common itself.

2011

The Select Board votes to standardize the system for handling parking space reservations for events. All requests, some of which were previously sent through the Collector's office, will henceforth be sent directly to the Select Board.

The Select Board approves new on-street meter rates of 50 cents per hour, making those equivalent to the rates in what had been the pay-and-display lots. It also reduces annual residential and employment parking permits to \$25 per year and increased annual lower garage level space rental to \$750 per year, all effective June 1.

These changes are part of a broader downtown parking improvement plan to include new pay-by-space machines in the garage and other parking lots, installed in summer/fall 2011.

2012

July

The Select Board establishes a policy authorizing the Town Manager, in consultation with the Select Board Chair, to act on time-sensitive parking requests prior to the next scheduled Select Board meeting, thereby avoiding the need for brief single-purpose Select Board meetings.

2013

2014