

**Denny Sealth School Departure Advisory Committee**  
**Denny Middle School**  
**September 16, 2008**  
**7:00 PM - 9:00 PM**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Committee Members**

Joe Cox  
Angela Ross  
Chris Eberly  
Mary Claire Duncan  
Monica Kenny  
Kenneth Kunz  
Don Gilmore

**Staff Members**

Thao Tran  
Tamara Garrett  
Sharon Star

**Welcome and Introduction:**

The meeting convened at 7:05 PM. Thao Tran welcomed all to the meeting this evening. He stated that the purpose for the meeting is due to the fact that the Seattle Public School has requested for a departure from the zoning codes of height limit and parking requirements for the development of Sealth Denny School site. The Seattle Municipal code requires that when the Seattle Public School desires to make a zoning change that the Department of Neighborhood (DON) initiate a public process to solicit community input on the issue. Seattle does not have zones per say specific for schools. Schools are often built in single family 5000 square feet units and it's important for the City to evaluate the potential impact of the proposed project on the neighborhood and community. Our task was to identify community members that are willing to serve, listen, advise and help collect public input.

Thao Tran spoke about a handout that describes the Departure process and that the committee first must determine whether the departure request is a major or standard issue for this neighborhood. A minor issue would require only one meeting while a classification of a major issue will require at least three meetings within 90 days. Furthermore, if the departure is approved, then the committee must decide if there should be recommended conditions to SPS to mitigate potential impacts to the neighborhood.

Thao Tran sited that once the meetings are concluded that he will write a report on behalf of the Committee to the Department of Neighborhoods Director, Stella Chao. Once the report is delivered, the Director will have up to ten days to publish her final decision on her recommendation to the Department of Planning and Development. Thao Tran opened the meeting for public comment and there was none.

## **Seattle Public School Presentation,**

Loren McCanahy with Bassetti Architects provided a quick overview of the project and then spoke about the two departures facing this project. There were three view boards on display. The first one was of aerial view of the schools/neighborhoods. The proposal is to co-locate Denny Middle School onto Chief Sealth campus with a connecting galleria. Sealth High School is being demolished and that process is underway which is shown in the diagram. The intent is to keep Thistle Street on the south and make that side the primary access to Sealth High School and have SW Kenyon Street as the primary access to the Denny Middle School. The second board was a three dimensional model of the site showing the linkage point as the central galleria on eastern edge of Sealth which runs north to south and is dividable to have a middle school lunch and high school lunch room. More significantly, the galleria is critical as it serves to link the two schools. The background behind the gym is where the new middle school will be. The third board shows the entrances into Denny Middle School.

### ***Height Departure***

Loren McCanahy mentioned that the face of Chief Sealth High School auditorium and the next additional part which is the top of galleria is 10 feet lower than highest point of Sealth School. The City of Seattle says we have to build a 35 feet wall with another 15 feet for a slope roof. For the secondary school we have to build below 60 feet as our top height. We are not approaching that 60 foot limit, and the new design will be ten feet below existing height. How we get this is the City asks for an average height above sea level, which is median height for the topography. The average of existing Sealth building is 322.7 above sea level. Building elevation allowed on the City's calculation allows for our highest point to be on the average of 341.3 feet above sea level and this is the scoped roof over the galleria. We are asking for departure for 345 with wiggle room.

Loren McCanahy spoke about the fourth display board referring to about average heights. She mentioned one area of interest is what happens down the side of the steep hill and how will construction impact the two story apartment neighbors to the east. The architects have responded by leaving major tree lines to camouflage the building, maintaining a 120 feet edge between building and adjacent neighbors. In addition the school is maintaining a 50 feet setback from property line.

Committee asked at what angle were the pictures taken. Loren McCanahy responded that they were taken from a yard in the apartment, 300-400 feet back from Kenyon Street in terms of where the school sits.

### ***Parking Departure***

The Seattle Municipal Code has an interesting way of setting the requirements for parking. On the existing site, we have a parking lot on southeast corner. The City says that it is pre-existing and thus grandfathered in. There are an additional 20 parking spaces at the Sealth southwest corner. That lot was not in the City's drawing so it views it as new parking. We also have an existing parking lot behind Sealth, it is un-striped and basically asphalt. We are making that into a striped official middle school drop-off

parent access parking lot. From the City's perspective, there are several things that are grandfathered in. First, the parking lot just referred is acceptable to meet the needs of the assembly area, auditorium, gyms, and galleria. When we look at additional parking for the new gym and the galleria, we need to ask how many parking spaces are required for the two new uses. The galleria is a square foot calculation which needs 211 parking spaces, the middle school gym needs 37 parking spaces, resulting in a need totaling of 248 parking spaces for the new area in the school. The old assembly areas are grandfathered in when we count up the spaces. In the new space there is 70 therefore the delta between 70 and 247 is 177 spaces. More information that is particularly important is that across the street at the major complex we have 300 spaces. On-adjacent streets there are 83 spaces directly around the Sealth lot and 291 spaces within 400 feet which is reasonable walking distance. The total of existing and proposed spaces is 849 spaces and the total for school property is 475 spaces. As a point of comparison with Franklin High School – 80 spaces, Roosevelt High – 114 spaces, West Seattle – 193 spaces, thus we can see that in comparison to these schools there is a huge amount of parking in the Chief Sealth site. The other point is to look at all the assembly areas we use at the same time. If the two major assemblies on this campus are used at one time, the impact of needing this 850 total parking space is almost slim to none.

Committee member asked for the official number of parking at Sealth currently. Denny has no on-site parking. Loren McCanahy pointed to the boards and explained that there are 20 and 105 marked and unmarked spaces. Don Gilmore showed the ones across the street because the school districts own them do not discount either because the land is contiguous?

Monica Kenney has concerns regarding the data because this is the first year Sealth is no longer busing students. The students are being given metro passes and that is typical for high schools now. She asked if we have data on students that are driving to school now. The architects asked that question and received no reply so they can not tell. They don't issue parking passes for students. Don Gilmore gave a comparison to West Seattle School has 1400 students and Sealth will be designed for 1200. That lot has 193 spaces and always has a place to park, and there are two lots. Public member said that the north and east side is accessible but that you can't park on south side because of storage and if you go half a block that's usually all full. Same thing happened at Sealth with the teachers because they have to park on the side street. It's a first come serve parking at Sealth. Students driving get into parking lot first, teachers have to find someplace else.

Don Gilmore stated that district doesn't give parking passes because not all the students want to park on campus. The only thing you can compare is how many students elect to park on campus. Roosevelt is always full and it has fewer spaces.

Mary Muillion asked are we adding Denny Middle to the Sealth site but not adding any additional parking other than what's there. Loren McCanahy said partially yes because this is paved asphalt and there are a few people that park there. The north lot was made into an official lot for Denny Middle and based on the way the City looks at it, this part (referring to the view boards) this is not present and will not become one so there is an

addition of these 50 spaces. Then there are 20 here, not sure why it was not counted by City. Don Gilmore asked how many parking spaces Denny Middle School has now. Denny has zero spaces on-site right now.

Joe Cox asked if it's safe to say that a majority of the teachers and staff park in the lower parking lot. Loren McCanahy said he could not say, except majority of them also park in the neighborhood. Joe Cox also asked why would they park in the lot directly behind them. Don Gilmore said that if they can park a shorter distance from the door then they will. Joe Cox said if you are looking to relocate everything it could be done north of Thistle Street and we are not including these spaces here and presuming they will try and find the closest parking spot.

Robert Evans said in proximity to the school, available parking is between 80 and 180 spaces on the side of the school which should more than accommodate parking demands and we should use these available street parking.

Committee member said that SW Kenyon Street is not an arterial street. It is a narrow steep street where 28<sup>th</sup> Street goes over the hill straight pass Sealth and the new site. I live on the dead end on 27<sup>th</sup> Street. Sounds like you are creating an arterial then if what you are saying about the relocation with all the traffic patterns in north end of SW Kenyon St.

### **Committee Discussion**

Monica Kenney said that she has looked at old permits for heights of recent years and the parking for the different high schools. Some of the schools are larger, like Ballard with 1650 students and has 149 parking spaces. When Don Gilmore spoke about West Seattle's stats and even Nathan Hale with 1100 students and 289 parking spaces, he reminded us that Nathan Hale has an athletic complex on their site too. Monica Kenny asked that wouldn't include those numbers. Don Gilmore said it would because it's co-tangent to their school.

Don Gilmore said Nathan Hale spaces have had this for the past 30 years, nothing is changing, what's happening is the lot are remaining as is. Those are the spaces they already had when the building was originally built.

Monica Kenney said Sealth High School has 197 spaces and effectively reduced to 115 and 60 for Denny so this is a loss of 20 spaces. Don Gilmore said that was without considering the 300 spaces across that the district owns. Monica Kenny stated she found transportation study which talks about what they want to do with Denny property and the loss of parking spaces, 180 spaces will be lost when they build the softball field, so the 300 parking spaces isn't true if the intent of what they say is realized.

Monica Kenney said people do not want to walk and will prefer to park in the neighborhood rather than walk the distant northeast corner of the Denny property down

the hill to Sealth. Don Gilmore said that they were getting off track and the site has not been designed yet.

Monica Kenney said that was her concern and we say it's all right to go with less parking because we have parking over here but we do not know what's going to happen with this property. Don Gilmore said that you can condition it with this process by saying that we would like it to remain where it is or we would like some of it to move up to the corner. Part of the process is that the committee can condition that and if the committee says all spaces to the south has to remain as they are then that's the condition of the permit.

Angela Ross said that earlier the school district representative said it does not issue parking permits to students. She is confused what that means, does it mean not allowed to park on school property if you don't have a permit or we encourage parking across the street and that on campus is a free for all, anybody can park there, first come, first serve or is there restrictions.

Don Gilmore said a lot depends on the individual administrator, there is no board policy or superintendent policy on issuing passes for students or non students. Different schools do it differently. In West Seattle the theory is that the north part of the lot is staff and south is for students and students pay \$5.00 for an identification card for their cars so if someone's car needs to be towed they would know whose car it is. Some of the lots are open 24 hours a day without gating so they are open to the public, the idea of the West Seattle parking lot was so that it could be used for the small junction for commercial so its open 24 hours a day. Some principals are very defensive of the space and title each space. Some will number students spaces and assign a student a number space. If the committee thought the lot should be open 24 hours a day, then that could be a condition of the departure. The committee has a possibility of many different options for conditions.

Mary Muillion asked if the handicapped space been accounted for because they won't be accessible to everyone and how many per area? Loren McCanahy said yes that the handicapped parking is accounted for.

Mary Muillion made an observation after visiting Sealth School at various times that because of the overload parking on the north side, there has always been empty parking space on the south side and five or less spaces on the north side. Hardly anyone parks on 27<sup>th</sup> Street above the school. One of the things discussed in the design committee was the project to encourage student parking on 27<sup>th</sup> Street which is wider and would be less disruptive to the neighborhood. This is an idea for managing the parking at the school.

Chris Eberly asked if the school district and architects have a contingency plan in case the departure is denied by the committee. Loren McCanahy said we have not designed the contingency plan per say. If this committee says they need more spaces we will work that. Don Gilmore included that the contingency plan would to take the playfield on the north end and turn it into a parking lot is what would happen. There is a playfield for the middle school students east of the 50 student lot should the committee deny the parking

then we would have to turn playfield into a parking lot because in the City's calculations we can't use the space to the south because the land is not conjoined.

Loren McCanahy added that this is one of the challenges for the school design team's proposals are where do we put the money? Parking is a tough trade off when you are looking at \$10,000 for a space and that's where you will invest a bunch of school district parking. We want a reasonable tool to solve the parking problem. We don't want to get out of bounds because it basically takes learning space away.

Angela Ross said she lives directly across the street on SW Kenyon Street and you are correct that there is not a lot of parking on the north side of the school at this point. The concern Mary Muillion has is making it a plan to reduce the traffic down around SW Kenyon Street. One of her primary concerns is encouraging students to park on 27<sup>th</sup> Street. She thinks it takes the responsibility off school district to protect those neighborhoods. I live on that street. There will be a lot of new traffic to that street and possibly increase vandalism on homes and property which are already occurring. I would like to know what the plan from the school district's perspective when they push all the parking onto the street, whose responsibility is it to monitor that parking.

Don Gilmore said from his experience serving on various Departure committees, he has seen other committees come up with various mitigations to parking. At Nathan Hale, the neighbors had same concern and they added a condition to the departure that the administration work with having students park on school property, this is like asking the administration about using the lot south of Thistle Street. You have the ability to add to the condition of the zoning mitigation. You can control it and at one of the other school they asked the school administration to where students park.

Joe Cox stated that it seems like they have two schools that are loosely linked, the parking is spread out around the neighborhood for both facilities. Parking for Denny Middle School goes down 29<sup>th</sup> Street to SW Trenton Street. It seems you are condensing these two sites, they are loosely connected in one tight spot and allowing parking to overflow onto the surrounding neighborhood.

Don Gilmore said that the committee has the ability to recommend to the school district that SDOT place no parking signs or no parking during schools hours. The issue it to get the parking used that is not used. The committee needs more creative ways to relieve the Kenyon Street issue by requiring people to park somewhere else. If this is "no parking" signs then we can go back to SDOT and ask for parking between 7:00am – 3:00pm. This is so the committee can come up with mitigations to reduce the impact on Kenyon Street.

Chris Eberly asked where will the buses go? Loren McCanahy replied that buses for Denny Middle School will be dropped off behind the school where it is turned into a drop-off/service drive. The high school does not have buses.

Mary Muillion agrees there will be increased traffic on Kenyon Street and it is a good suggestion for having it signed for parking regulation. She said that having increase

traffic might have benefits because there are more eyes on your property and school security does go out to street for issues.

Monica Kenney stated that from looking at these numbers, she is confused with the new project why there is less parking? She needs more clarification on this.

Kenneth Kuntz said that middle school children do not drive. Monica Kenney said that the parking was for staff. He would like better numbers around the middle school teachers that are driving and then from high school, which ones are driving age so that we can see the impact from student drivers.

Don Gilmore said that one of the reason this site has fewer spaces because we have 300 spaces across the street. The school district made a decision not to condemn housing to build parking as the solution for increasing parking area or build parking structures which would not be publicly popular. If we look at total demand and total provided, the provided exceeds the actual demand.

### **Public Comment**

Charles Stangle said that the northwest parking lot is being used for a construction area right now. The City has no recommendations for that being a parking lot. How did they build it, pave it and put in new lighting? Don Gilmore replied he had no answer for that.

Tamara Garrett stated that only school district can explain on how the parking was created. Don Gilmore said theorizing that maintenance crew gradually over the years paved more area and is sure they placed the lighting. Charles Stangle said that all that was done in the last year. Why isn't the City counting this as parking space for Sealth?

Angela Ross gave an explanation on a meeting she attended before that there are more parking spaces that people are using on the campus but it is if they are not specifically lined, measured and have barriers that the City does not count them as parking. Don Gilmore and Tamara Garrett both agreed with Angela's explanation.

Chris Jackins distributed information for everyone at the meeting then read a couple of paragraphs from this document.

Pablo Lambinico said there are three on the committee that have expressed concerns about the Departure. The responses have been to legislate and regulate human behavior for high school students, not sure you can do that. He is concern about dislocating and relocating parking which should merit in what you decide about the departure. He expressed that human use paths and will use the shortest distant to get somewhere. He stated that he has lived here since 1974.

Joe asked about all committee members and how they are affiliated to the neighborhood. Each member gave their reply with how they are connected to the neighborhood.

Robert Evans discussed that through the school design committee the hours closest to classes between 6:30am to 4:00pm have the biggest traffic impact. Don Gilmore asked Robert Evans how many total spaces did he calculate on a daily basis. Robert Evans said roughly 270, all lots combined included across the street is 475. Thao Tran thought overflow was over 30 spaces. Robert Evans said overflow was more like 70 – 80 parking in the streets because of students. He was assuming max capacity with an ebb and flow in the course of a day.

Faith Fisher asked why staff and students can not be assigned parking across the street and let that be the end of the story. Don Gilmore and Thao Tran said that could be identified as a condition of the departure.

### **Committee Discussion**

Thao Tran thought motions were needed on a couple of items at this time. First, the committee will need to entertain a motion to decide whether the height and parking departure request should be classified as a standard or major one.

**Motion:** Don Gilmore made a motion to vote this departure request to be a standard one. There was seconded at this time.

Monica Kenney wanted to better understand the whole process and felt she could possibly not make a decision tonight. Thao Tran gave a better explanation on how this process works. Don Gilmore asked about if this is a major issue if we have to meet two more times? Thao Tran said according to Code that we would have to.

**Motion:** Angela Ross made a motion that this be a major departure. Monica Kenney seconded. There was a request that there be a further discussion before the vote.

### **Height Discussion:**

**Motion:** Don Gilmore asked for the granting of the height departure of 345 feet. Mary Claire seconded. Angela Ross had questions and concerns about heights.

Angela Ross wanted clarification from the architect with questions on the height. The drawing all have the perspective of looking from Thistle to the north and just curiously standing on SW Kenyon Street and looking south, the highest point is the dome. Is the gym roof 327.6 feet all the way across? Loren McCanahy replied that it is all the same height all the way through.

Loren McCanahy stated that the highest point of the school is the top of auditorium arch and highest point of new addition is the galleria which is the center spine that's 10 feet lower than the top of barrel vault at the south edge of this site. Other slightly high zones are two classroom wings and a gym in the back that are in-line with the Sealth gym. Angela Ross asked for the heights. Loren McCanahy said the classroom wings – 339 ft,

galleria – 340. Angela Ross said a point of concern is if there are shadows on the Long fellow Creek.

Joe Cox stated that light can have a barren on fish in a stream, shade can effect the environment. Don Gilmore asked Loren McCanahy how far is the school building from the creek? The classroom wing to adjacent apartment is 120 feet, therefore 250 – 300 feet to stream edge. There is an issue of a major forest zone, that creek as it runs through the forest is in shade. There is a wide zone between the school and adjacent properties and even wider zone before you get to the creek. The existing gym is the adjacent structure to the creek. The new school is adjacent to the apartment which is on the north side. Don Gilmore said they could do a sun study if it was desirable.

Angela Ross stated that her question before had to do with all the building elevation being allowed up to 322 feet and what was presented is part that we are speaking about is for departure is the center structure but in fact all the classroom buildings is going to be departing that building elevation allowed. A question from the committee's standpoint as we discuss the elevation departure is that something we address building by building or is that a total for entire vicinity.

Don Gilmore said the stated the ordinance highest point of the addition because it doesn't ask for the average height. We could average it all again, he agreed that Angela Ross was right that there are points that are above the 322 figure. The ordinance says we have to compare the 322 to the highest part and the mass is higher of the galleria.

Kenneth Kunz asked the architects if the height becomes an issue and if the drawings have to be redone. This creates additional costs and it will still go through, my point is that readjusting all heights will add costs to this project.

Thao Tran gave the committee some ideas on issues to think about. Don Gilmore asked how Loren McCanahy would compare the structure to three story apartment complex. Loren McCanahy said it's similar in height; we tried very hard to do make it so. This is a terraced site with the high school on top, middle school is on the lower and that was intentional to the design team's approach. Critical item is learning space, with research kids learn better with good day lighting in the classroom. The roof forms of the building are to bring more daylight into the building. Don Gilmore said they tried to come up with a bulk and height that was relevant to the neighborhood with the new developments along Holden Street.

Angela Ross said it is not in the multi-complex zone. She said the gym on Kenyon Street seems like this enormous looming thing and this structure is going to be 15 feet taller and closer to where she lives. I don not know how to make that determination on the committee, that is her gut feelings. I do not want to look at this site from across the street. Don Gilmore said this problem occurs with every committee that works on schools because the City doesn't have school zone. Other areas have school zones and there are regulations for how it is supposed to be. Seattle elected allow the school had to comply with the zone that it is in so if a heavy multi-family zone then it could be 90 feet

high. If it is in a single-family zone it would be limited to the 35 feet rule so a building will never be congruent with the neighborhood. So the committee has to decide if it is reasonable for the school district to build for the good of the region. There is no doubt that this has a local impact, we will never be able to build buildings that are the scale of the neighborhood. We try to break the size and scale down. All we can try to do is the best we can and serve the needs of the students and whole region because we draw students from a large area.

Monica Kenney asked how close the new Denny School building to the apartments is? Loren McCanahy said 120 feet wall to wall. Roughly 50 feet from the building to the property line and there is a 30 foot right of way between the west property line and the east property line and roughly 40 feet to apartment façade.

**Vote:** Thao asked for a vote of those in favor of the height departure request by the school district.

Monica said that when she signed up for this committee she thought it was a commitment for three meetings. She feels like she is being pushed. Angela said she does not understand process and needs more clarification and she doesn't want to approve the elevation departure and what does that mean. What is the consequence of the decision if we don't like this idea, what are our alternatives?

Don Gilmore gave a more explanation about what this process is and where it does go from this point and the options. Another committee member stated essentially we are making a recommendation to the DON Director what to do. Don Gilmore gave an overview on the whole process and alternatives. Mary Claire thought people felt more comfortable with more meeting, she was OK with that.

Tamara Garret read from the process document handed out at the beginning of meeting. Angela Ross asked about Thao Tran about the timeframe to get back information within the time of the next meeting. Tamara Garret referred to the third page of the same document and the role of the committee that is the criteria that needs to be taken into consideration.

Don Gilmore said if the committee wants more impact on the parking the debate would be what kind of conditions to put on what road and the parking lot, those are the real issues.

Joe Cox would like more information on traffic counts on Kenyon Street and what is projected and tie that with parking space. Don Gilmore said to send the committee more data and so the committee can come back at the next meeting more informed.

Mary Muillion stated from the parking departure that she does not want to impact family from evening events at night. She wants to put stipulations on events in the evening. Don Gilmore gave examples of numbers uses at different schools. Mary Claire also stated that the schools do not schedule on the same nights. Mary Muillion wants this

condition to be put into the departure report. Mary Claire wants the administrators to work and inform the neighborhoods.

**Motion:** Don Gilmore asked to amend a motion from early to have a second meeting. Monica seconded.

**Vote:** Thao Tran asked those in favor to make this a minor departure.

Favor – 3

Rejected - 3

Vote: Draw

**Motion:** Don Gilmore make a motion to make this is a major departure. Angela Ross seconded.

**Vote:** Yes - 6

**Motion:** Don Gilmore made a motion be that height departure be approved at 345 feet.

**Vote:** Yes - 5

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 7, from 7:00-9:00 PM at Denny Middle School.