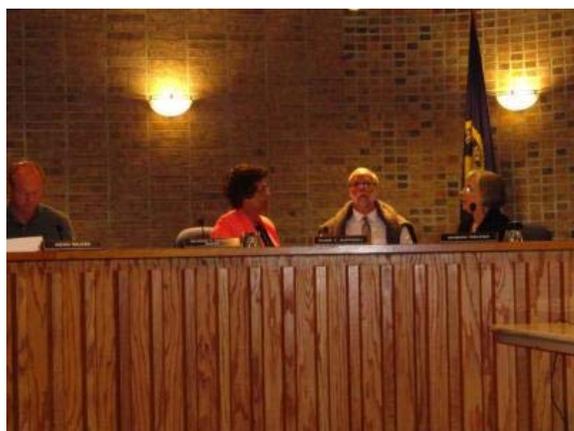


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Council Divided on Dinky MOU

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At last night's Borough Council meeting, Anne Waldron Neumann of the public citizens' group [Save the Dinky](#) described Councilwomen Jenny Crumiller and Jo Butler as "heroines" for their stance against Princeton University's plans to move the Dinky station. That

didn't prevent the rest of the Borough Council from voting "Yes" on the [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) drawn up earlier this week between the Township, Borough, and University.

On Monday October 3rd, Save the Dinky initiated a [lawsuit](#) to keep the University from moving the Dinky. At the Tuesday night meeting, Borough residents were present to express their thoughts on the Dinky move and the future of mass transit in Princeton.

To kick off the MOU discussion, Councilman Kevin Wilkes explained that when the original MOU was released to the public last April, the Council heard from the community over the summer regarding its inadequacies.

The University, Borough and Township reworked the draft to address missing elements such as creating a transit task force upon MOU approval instead of waiting until completion of the Arts Transit project.

"The MOU addresses three issues," says Wilkes, "To improve dinky service in the present day in its present condition, to improve rail transit service as outlined by the university in their proposed move, and to look down the road to see how we might improve rail transit at a time we do not yet know."

Probably the strongest statement of the evening came from Councilwoman Jenny Crumiller, who called the MOU a “quid pro quo agreement made behind closed doors and under threat, which undervalues the loss of the ‘straight shot’ right of way, parking lot and existing Dinky station.”

“The worst part of the MOU,” Crumiller said, is “giving away the existing ‘straight shot’ right of way that leaves us with a zigzag Big Dipper Path circumventing the arts building. For those with visions of light rail connections to Nassau Street someday, this is the most compelling reason not to sign the MOU.”

Crumiller went on to state that the Dinky is one of New Jersey’s “better performing railway lines,” and that we are “giving away a contribution to ‘Boroughness’: old, simple, solid and ours. We hear the train whistle and we love it. Moving the Dinky is giving away ‘Boroughness’. In the Borough we value old things, character and walking to the station and nothing in the MOU preserves this. I urge my colleagues to vote against it or at least postpone it until after the public hearing.”

Councilwoman Jo Butler agreed, and presented an “Amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding.” In three short paragraphs, the amendment stated that the Borough does not share in assuming the University’s right to relocate the Dinky line, calling it “unwise public policy” that would not work well with sustainable growth. Butler said that without the amendment, she felt that the Council was doing a great disservice to the public.

When Mayor Mildred Trotman opened the meeting to the public, Anne Neumann announced that she and her husband were plaintiffs in the lawsuit against the university.

She called the MOU a cynical insult to the intelligence of anyone not associated with admittedly a fine University and was glad to give the Council the option not to vote on the MOU until the lawsuit had run its course.

Jill Jachera, Republican candidate for Borough Mayor, commended the University for increasing its commitment under the MOU, and felt that the Borough should recognize that the University doesn’t have to do anything. She commended the Council for seeking legal counsel and recommended following this counsel rather than following avenues not open to the Borough, otherwise they would waste resources of the entire community. She addressed Crumiller, emphasizing that “we don’t have a right, the university has the right, we don’t own anything and we need to recognize

that and do the best that we can in that instance. “ Jachera said the right to walk to the Dinky is not a right but a “desire.”

Resident Chip Kreider recommended removing the references to “light rail,” saying it reads like a promotional document for light rail and why have a transit study with a foregone conclusion.

Yina Moore, Democratic candidate for Borough Mayor and member of the Planning Board, expressed disappointment that the document contained no written opinion from the attorney hired on specific right of way issues. She then wondered why rush to vote on the MOU, and why not wait until Princeton is a unified municipality.

University spokesman Robert Durkee stated that there is no desire on the part of the university to get rid of the Dinky, as more than half the riders are from the university.

Referring to Anne Neumann’s earlier complaint about obvious wording, as far as facilities found in Princeton that cannot be found in New York City or Philadelphia, he cited the Experimental Media Studio as a type of facility that will only be available in Princeton.

Durkee also explained why the Dinky station hasn’t been open since 1984. In the 1984 agreement, New Jersey Transit (NJT) was to operate the station and the current MOU states specifically that the University would take over the station. NJT has made it clear that they won’t fund the operating of the station, so therefore the University will fund it.

“And to my knowledge,” Durkee continued, “The University has no interest in withdrawing the PILOT. [University President Shirley] Tilghman said that level of contribution would depend upon whether Princeton University is in a community where they can meet their highest commitment to the arts.”

The meeting concluded with the Borough Council voting Yes by a 3-2 vote on the Memorandum of Understanding, with Council members Kevin Wilkes, Roger Martindell and Barbara Trelstad voting Yes, and Crumiller and Butler voting No. The Council also voted down adding Councilwoman Butler’s amendment to the MOU. David Goldfarb recused himself from the votes.

On Thursday night, October 6, the Planning Board will meet at 7:30 in Princeton Township Hall to discuss the E5 (Arts and Transit) zoning.

Attachment	Size
MOU.pdf	54.98 KB

About the Author »



Bonnie Schultz

Bonnie Schultz has worked as a technology and marketing writer in the Boston area. She moved here in 1997 and is the mother of two boys. Since 2007, Bonnie has been blogging about food and community happenings in the Princeton area.

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