

Work begins on Grace Hall lot

The sound of heavy equipment and the smell of tar provided distractions Monday as students at Provincetown High School attended classes while workmen outside began renovating Grace Hall parking lot.

The renovation should take about three weeks, said Town Manager William McNulty, adding that no work will be done on weekends.

He said he hasn't heard any complaints about the noise, but several students Monday said they found the noise of the equipment and the smell of the tar distracting.

"It distracted us from our studies, and the smell was quite disgusting," said 10th grader Tina Perry. "The smell was so bad that during reading class, up on the third floor, I almost got sick."

Tenth grader Susan McCabe said, "The school needs a lot of work done, but it shouldn't be done during classes."

Her classmate Ruth Ann Dutra agreed. "We couldn't even hear the tape in Spanish class, it was so noisy."

Originally, the repaving of the parking lot had been planned for the summer, so as not to distract the students.

However, in July the selectmen decided to postpone the renovation when Selectman George Bryant protested that the work would force the closing of sections of the town's

second-biggest parking lot during the peak summer season and cost the town parking fee revenues.

School committee members, on learning in July that the parking lot work had been stalled by the selectmen, wrote a letter of protest.

McNulty said he told the selectmen about the letter, signed by School Superintendent Frederick Bardsley, "but they didn't do anything about it. To the best of my knowledge, that letter was never answered."

McNulty said he wanted to proceed with the renovation during the summer, even though that would have cost the town an estimated loss of \$5,000 in parking receipts, "but the selectmen thought differently, and in order to avoid a fight, I let it go at that."

The original contract with M.F. Roach Company of Eastham, which included repaving the oiled pavement with macadam, putting in curbing and providing drainage and planting areas, set the price for the renovation at \$95,000.

M.F. Roach "agreed to hold to the same price—we made sure of that," McNulty said.

The parking lot surface crumbled badly last winter, and drainage problems have often resulted in "a torrent" of water from the lot to Bradford Street, he said.

"The previous surface was oiled, not macadam, and it had about seven coats of oil on it put down over the years," he said.

The renovation "includes what we believe to be adequate drainage, and there will be curbing, and most importantly there will be planted areas, so it should look nice in about five years."

McNulty said the school has agreed to take charge of placing loam and plants in bathtub-like planters the town will provide.

Seventh and eighth graders are attending the parish school this year and walk to the high school for lunch and such special classes as shop.

At the request of Bardsley, the repaving was not started during the first week of school, so as to give the seventh and eighth graders time to learn the path to the high school without having to dodge the paving equipment.

The repaving "seems to be going pretty well," said Bardsley, who added, "We understood that there would be problems doing it at this time, and this is why we were urging to have it done in the summer months. But it's something we can work around." The seventh and eighth graders have been "informed" on how to avoid the work in progress in getting from the parish school to the high school, he said.