



CITY OF CONCORD

New Hampshire's Main Street™

City Manager's Office

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City Manager

Parking Committee Minutes

November 25, 2019

Attendees:

Byron Champlin, Chair City Councilor

Linda Kenison, City Councilor

Brent Todd, City Councilor

Mark Coen, City Councilor

Jim Bouley, Mayor

Staff:

Matt Walsh, Director of Redevelopment, Downtown Services, & Special Projects

Tom Aspell, City Manager

Carlos Baia, Deputy City Manager of Development

Chip Chesley, General Services Director

Daniel Andrus, Fire Chief

David Florence, Parking Division Supervisor

Amanda Lombard, Fiscal Clerk - Parking Division

Public:

Meredith Hatfield, City Councilor

Tim Sink, President, Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce

Johane Telgener, President, Intown Concord, Inc.

Michael Herrmann, Owner, Gibson's Bookstore and Board Member of Intown Concord, Inc.

Dawn Triconi, Executive Director, Intown Concord, Inc.

The meeting began at 4:54 PM.

1. **Overview of Agenda:** Councilor Champlin provided an overview of the meeting agenda and welcomed members of the public in attendance.
2. **Adoption of Minutes:** Councilor Todd moved to adopt the minutes of October 28, 2019 as presented. Councilor Coen seconded. Councilor Champlin noted two minor typographical errors for correction. It was agreed the minutes would be corrected. The minutes, as amended, were adopted on a unanimous voice vote.
3. **Requests / Referrals:** Tim Sink, President of the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce'; Johane Telgener, President of Intown Concord, Inc.; Dawn Triconi, Executive Director of Intown Concord, Inc.; and Michael Herrmann, Owner of Gibsons Bookstore and Board Member of Intown Concord, Inc. met with the Parking Committee to discuss parking meter expansion areas, specifically, metering of approximately 60 parking spaces on Storrs Street between Theatre and South Main Street.

Tim Sink addressed the Parking Committee. He discussed recent changes to parking rates and hours of enforcement in relation to lower paid downtown employees, especially those working at retail establishments and restaurants. He also expressed concerns about the installation of 315 additional parking meters in the Downtown area in relation to lower paid employees. The meters are scheduled to be operational in December 2019.

Mr. Sink then discussed the Storrs Street Parking Garage. He reported that he recently conducted a census of vacant parking spaces, and determined that approximately 200 spaces were vacant at any one time daily. Many of these spaces were lease spaces reserved for Concord Hospital. Mr. Sink suggested that the City explore offering a program whereby discounted parking passes would be sold at a cost of \$3-\$4 / day to employees of qualified downtown businesses for the Storrs Street Garage. He noted that the City of Portsmouth recently enacted such a program for their Foundry Street Parking Garage, and suggested that Concord should explore a similar program for the Storrs Street Garage.

Michael Herrmann expanded upon Mr. Sink's comments. He testified that Gibsons Bookstore has three leased parking spaces in the Storrs Street Garage. He stated that several of his employees use free on-street parking on Storrs Street south of Theatre Street. He suggested that the cost of parking is a financial hardship for low paid retail and restaurant workers in Downtown. Councilor Todd asked Mr. Herrmann about the typical hours for his employees. Mr. Herrmann responded that a typical shift is about 8 hours; however, he does have some part-time employees. Councilor Champlin asked Mr. Herrmann which of his employees use his three spaces in the Storrs Street Garage. Mr. Herrmann responded that the spaces are not assigned, but are typically used by his bookkeeper and tellers.

Discussion ensued. Members of the Parking Committee offered several comments, as follows. Mayor Bouley disclosed that he is a member of the Chamber of Commerce and rents parking from the Chamber at the Capitol Shopping Plaza.

- It was noted that, anecdotally, a variety of individuals, including higher paid employees and shoppers, appear to use the 60 spaces on Storrs Street south of Theatre Street, not just lower paid downtown employees. Members of the Committee questioned how the City could lawfully tailor a parking permit program exclusively for lower paid employees.
- Members of the Parking Committee suggested that Downtown employers should better compensate lower paid retail and restaurant employees so they could afford parking.
- It was noted that the cost of public parking in the Storrs Street Garage is currently \$0.50 / hour, and that the total daily cost to a typical user is currently \$2 - \$4.50 per day. Therefore, the Committee questioned why a special permit would need to be created by the City when the cost of parking was already in line with Mr. Sink's recommendation. Further, it was noted that Portsmouth has enacted their program due to low utilization of the newly opened Foundry Street garage. Concord's situation with the Storrs Street garage is different, as the spaces in the Storrs Street Garage are leased; however, they are not being used by lessees.
- Members of the Committee questioned why the Chamber and Intown were only focused on the South Main Street area regarding their parking concerns. It was noted that the City has

3 parking garages, which, combined, offer in excess of 400 parking spaces at \$0.50 per hour. It was also noted that public parking in the School Street Garage is underutilized.

- Maps were distributed to the public which detailed the location of metered and free parking. Some members of the public stated they were unaware how much free parking remained available, even with the additional 315 meters being installed.
- A discussion ensued concerning the challenges of the City's current lease model and inefficiencies associated therewith. Discussion ensued about the benefits of transitioning all of the City's parking garages from leases to permits. It was noted that moving to permits was a key recommendation of the 2017 Strategic Parking Plan and critical for future economic development in Downtown.
- Concord Hospital's low utilization of their lease spaces was specifically discussed. City staff explained that the hospital has 150 spaces in the Storrs Street Garage, but typically only uses 70-80 on a daily basis. Mr. Walsh stated that the City has made multiple efforts to engage Concord Hospital in negotiations over the past 2+ years to transition their spaces in the Storrs Street Parking Garage from leases to a permit system. Staff suggested the City would be grateful if Mr. Sink or Ms. Telgener could help the City with getting Concord Hospital to engage on this issue.

Discussion also ensued regarding lease spaces offered by the Chamber of Commerce in the Capitol Shopping Plaza parking lot. It was noted that said spaces are offered at \$55 / month. Members of the Parking Committee suggested that the Chamber of Commerce could re-examine how it manages these spaces, and perhaps could offer them exclusively to lower paid retail and restaurant workers. Mr. Sink indicated the Chamber would take that recommendation under advisement.

Discussion ensued concerning the Chamber of Commerce's relationship with Brixmor (the property owner) and Foxfire Properties. It was noted that the Chamber contracts with Foxfire on behalf of Brixmor, to enforce illegal public parking in the 900 space parking lot. Mr. Sink indicated that Foxfire patrols the lot approximately 4 hours per day. It was unclear how many cars, if any, were towed from the lot for illegal public parking.

Dawn Triconi, Executive Director of Intown Concord, and Johane Telgener, President of Intown Concord, stated that Intown Concord planned to survey Downtown merchants about employee parking. Members of the Parking Committee and City staff suggested several questions for the survey, including whether downtown employers provide parking for their employees at their expense, and, if so, where said parking was located and the monthly cost of said parking spaces.

4. **Narrow Streets Project:**

- a. **Zone 4 (Old North Cemetery Neighborhood):** It was reported that Councilors Kenison and Coen, working with Mr. Walsh, recently completed an in-the-field review of the staff recommendations for Zone 4 of the narrow streets study area (a.k.a. the Old North Cemetery Neighborhood). The Parking Committee reviewed a spreadsheet detailing their proposed modifications to the staff recommendations.

Meredith Hatfield, Ward 4 City Councilor, addressed the Parking Committee. It was noted that she is the Ward Councilor for the Old North Cemetery Neighborhood. Councilor Hatfield thanked the Parking Committee for their work on this issue, and suggested modifying recommendations for certain streets as follows:

- **Bradley Street:** Councilor Hatfield stated that she agreed with recommendations to limit parking to one side of the road, but asked the Committee to consider alternating which side of the road on a block by block basis. She specifically suggested the following:
 - Franklin to Church: parking on the east side of the road.
 - Church to Walker: parking on the west side of the road.
 - Walker to Penacook: parking on the east side of the road.
- **Perkins Street:** Councilor Hatfield noted that she lives on Perkins Street and that she is comfortable with the idea of converting the street to one-way. She recommended that traffic be west bound from Bradley to Rumford due to children playing at the Rumford end of Perkins. She also stated that she supports limiting parking to one side of the street. Discussion ensued. Chip Chesley, General Services Director, recommended that parking be on the curbed side of the street (i.e. the south side) as that would help preserve the pavement shoulder on the north side of the road, which is uncurbed. This would result in the passage side of vehicles abutting traffic. It was noted that such a parking arrangement would be somewhat unusual for a one-way street. After additional discussion, it was the consensus of the Parking Committee to proceed with this recommendation.
- **Rumford Street:** Councilor Hatfield stated that she concurred with recommendations to limit parking to one side of the street. However, she questioned whether parking should be removed near the crest of the hill. Discussion ensued. It was the consensus of the Parking Committee to discuss this option with the public during the upcoming forum on December 5th.
- **Walker Street:** Councilor Hatfield noted that the staff recommendation called for limiting parking to one side of the street; however, the Parking Committee was recommending no changes. She expressed concerns about not making any changes to Walker Street. She also discussed challenges associated with the width of the street and suggested that parking be limited to the south side of the road. It was the consensus of the Parking Committee to proceed with Councilor Hatfield's recommendation.

It was the consensus of the Parking Committee to update its recommendations to include those suggestions offered by Councilor Hatfield. Mr. Walsh reminded the Parking Committee that the second public forum for Zone 4 has been scheduled for December 5, 2019 at 7:00PM in the City Council Chambers.

- b. **Zone 1 (Wall Street Neighborhood):** It was the consensus of the Parking Committee to schedule the initial public forum for the Zone 1 neighborhood in February 2020. Staff will select some potential dates and poll the Committee.

5. **Strategic Parking Plan Update:**

- a. FY2019 Parking Fund Budget Year End Update (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019): Mr. Walsh walked through a brief year-end overview of the FY2019 Parking Fund Budget.

He reported that net operating revenues were \$672,000. He noted that the fund was budgeted to have net operating revenues of -\$56,000. Key factors influencing the Fund's strong performance included the inability to fill several part-time Parking Enforcement Officer positions created in the FY2019 budget, maintenance budget savings, as well as one time revenues associated with the sale of the Dixon Avenue Parking Lot.

As of June 30 2019, the fund balance for the Parking Fund was approximately \$675,000, thus achieving the City's fiscal policy goal of fund balance being at least 10% or better of the fund's annual expenditures.

While the Parking Fund is currently performing well, it was noted that the City cannot be complacent, as debt service from current and future capital projects will put stress on the Fund in the coming years. Staff provided a copy of the FY2019-2025 Parking Fund Pro Forma, which projected the impacts of future debt service on the fund.

- b. School Street Parking Garage Budget: Mr. Walsh reported that repairs and renovations continue at the garage. He noted that concrete repairs are focused on the first and second floors of the facility. Concrete deterioration has significantly worsened since the initial structural assessment of the facility was completed in 2012 (7 years ago), as well as since the scope of work for concrete repairs was put out to bid in April 2017 (nearly 3 years ago).

Concerning concrete repairs, the first two levels of the garage receive the greatest amount of vehicle traffic, and, therefore, experience greater damage from salt laden snow and slush being tracked by vehicles into the garage during winter months. When snow and slush melts, the salt laden water penetrates cracks in the concrete decks and walls and rots metal rebar imbedded in the concrete. This results in significant structural issues.

Beyond additional concrete repairs, the project has experienced budget overages related to security cameras, lighting, as well as utility conflicts associated with the new south stair tower (a.k.a. Warren Street stair tower). These items have essentially used the additional \$255,000, which was appropriated as part of the FY2020 budget for replacement of the South Stair / Warren Street Plaza (\$155,000) and miscellaneous contingency (\$100,000).

Mr. Walsh stated that City Administration plans to seek an additional \$300,000 from the City Council in December in order to complete the project. Funds would be programmed for the following:

South Stair Plaza Reconstruction:	\$155,000
Supplemental Concrete Repairs:	\$75,000
Supplemental Lighting Improvements:	\$25,000
Miscellaneous Contingency:	\$50,000

With these additional funds, the total budget for the project will increase to \$5,790,116.

- c. Security: Mr. Walsh provided a status report regarding installation of security cameras in the City's three parking garages.

- d. Parking Enforcement Officer (“PEO”) Recruitment: Mr. Walsh reported that two of the three full time PEO positions created as part of the FY2020 budget have been filled. The second new hire is scheduled to start on December 9th. Recruitment for the third position is ongoing, as one candidate recently backed out. Recruitment for the part-time Meter Tech will begin shortly.
- e. Pay by Phone: Mr. Walsh reported that the contract should be finalized shortly after Thanksgiving. The “go live” date for implementation remains January 31. However, this date might be delayed to mid-February 2020 if contract documents are not finalized and executed by December 1st.
- f. Meter Zone Expansion Phase II: Mr. Walsh stated that meters were tentatively scheduled to be operational on or about December 1st. However, IPS, the City’s smart meter vendor, will likely miss this deadline due to issues with coin canisters. Mr. Walsh stated that he was hopeful that the new meters would be operational by January 1st, as the FY2020 budget anticipated that meters would be operational in January.

The Parking Committee asked staff to prioritize installation of meter heads so that meters on Storrs Street, south of Theatre Street, would be installed last. Staff stated they would work with the contractor to accommodate this request.

Mr. Walsh noted that he anticipates \$60,000-\$70,000 will be available in the project budget. He indicated that staff would move forward with the purchase of additional meters in order to expedite replacement of the 375 mechanical meters set forth in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

6. Other Business: The Mayor reported that he had received complaints from certain downtown businesses regarding meter feeding by contractors renovating the new Bangor Savings Bank at 76 North Main Street. Mr. Walsh stated that he had received similar complaints back in September, and that he had personally called and emailed the project’s general contractor about this issue. He stated that he would work with David Florence, Parking Supervisor, to ensure that meter feeding was being appropriately enforced in the event the Contractor has not secured parking encumbrance permits for said parking spaces.
7. Adjourned: A motion was made and duly seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried on a voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 6:25PM.

Respectfully Submitted

Amanda Lombard
Parking Division Fiscal Tech III