



CITY OF CONCORD

New Hampshire's Main Street™

City Manager's Office

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Thomas J. Aspell, Jr.
City Manager

Parking Committee Minutes

April 27, 2020

Attendees:

Byron Champlin, City Councilor, Chair
Jim Bouley, Mayor
Linda Kenison, City Councilor
Brent Todd, City Councilor
Nathan Fennessy, City Councilor

Staff:

Carlos Baia, Deputy City Manager of Development
Matt Walsh, Director of Redevelopment, Downtown Services, & Special Projects
Karen Hill, Transportation Engineer
David Florence, Parking Division Supervisor
Amanda Lombard, Parking Division Fiscal Tech III

Public:

Zandra Rice Hawkins, City Councilor
Phil Donovan, Concord Resident

The meeting began at 5:01 PM

Matt Walsh, Director of Redevelopment, Downtown Services, & Special Projects read into the record the Covid-19 Pandemic public meeting procedures notice. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order # 12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, the Parking Committee is authorized to meet electronically. The City is utilizing the Zoom platform for this electronic meeting.

1. **Overview of Agenda:** Councilor Champlin provided an overview of the meeting agenda and welcomed members and public.
2. **Adoption of Minutes:** Councilor Todd moved to adopt the minutes of February 24, 2020. Mayor Bouley seconded. The minutes were adopted on a unanimous roll call vote.

3. **Request for Referrals:**

- a. **Long Pond Road:** The Parking Committee reviewed a request from Phil Donovan concerning the establishment of a no parking zone near the Swope Conservation Area on Long Pond Road. Mr. Donovan resides at 42 Long Pond Road. When the Swope parking lot is full, vehicles park on both the east and west side of the road essentially making it a one-lane travel way.

Upon receiving Mr. Donovan's request on March 22, 2020, Karen Hill, City Transportation Engineer, reviewed this issue. Based upon her review, and in recognition the Parking Committee was not scheduled to meet in March, City Administration implemented an interim emergency no parking zone for a 580 +/- section on the east side of Long Pond Road. This interim measure was put in place until the Parking Committee could meet to formally review this issue, and determine whether any permanent ordinances should be recommended to the City Council concerning this situation.

Mr. Donovan stated although the interim no parking zone has helped, vehicles now park on the opposite side of the road and use his driveway as a turnaround. He would like to see no parking instituted on both sides of the road. He also asked that the no parking zone be extended south past his driveway.

Karen Hill expressed concern with this request and surmised that it would relocate the parking issues to a new area of Long Pond Road, thus perpetuating the current narrow street safety issues at a new location.

Councilor Todd moved to recommend creation of an ordinance which would make the interim 580' no parking zone on the east side of Long Pond Road permanent. Councilor Kenison seconded. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

- b. **Curbside Pickup Parking in Downtown Central Business District:** This item was referred to the Parking Committee by the City Council during its April 13, 2020 meeting at the request of Councilor Rice-Hawkins.

This referral was prompted by an April 10, 2020 email sent by David Wheeler to the City Council and City Administration concerning enforcement of downtown metered parking during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Mr. Wheeler and his wife own property located at 55 North Main Street. Mr. Wheeler suggested that the City should suspend meter enforcement during the Pandemic due to reduced business activity and high unemployment rates.

Staff responded to Mr. Wheeler in writing on April 10, 2020. Staff informed Mr. Wheeler that the City was continuing to enforce parking during the Pandemic as many downtown businesses had been deemed essential services, and thus allowed to remain open under the Governor's Executive Orders. Per the City's past experiences, if the City suspended enforcement of parking regulations, downtown employees still reporting to work, as well as downtown residents who are staying home per the Governor's "shelter in place order", would likely park at metered on-street spaces all day, thus unnecessarily taking up prime on-street spaces and further hurting restaurants and other businesses that rely upon on-street parking for take-out and curbside customers.

Mr. Walsh further noted that suspending parking regulations would result in additional lost revenues, not only from metered parking, but from permit holders and lessees that would likely seek refunds for unused parking during the pandemic.

During the April 13, 2020 City Council meeting, Councilor Rice Hawkins requested that the City consider implementing “curbside pick-up only spaces” for restaurants and essential businesses.

Discussion ensued. Staff stated their opinion that no ordinances currently exist which would allow for the suspension of meter regulations in favor of temporary curb side pick-up parking spaces. Given the number of restaurants and other businesses now relying on curbside pick-up, staff expressed concern about the quantity of such spaces that might be requested or required. Staff also noted that no restaurants or business owners had approached City Administration requesting curb side pick-up spaces. Mr. Walsh added that he had discussed this issue with the City Manager earlier in the day, and that City Administration felt that creation of such spaces should only occur after a vote by the City Council. It was noted that other City programs (such as the Pay-As-You-Throw trash program) were only suspended after a vote of the City Council.

Several members of the Parking Committee expressed concerns about the significant negative economic development impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on local businesses and asked that the City Administration take a softer approach concerning enforcement actions and issuance of parking tickets. Several members of the Committee suggested that tickets should only be issued for egregious parking violations.

David Florence, Parking Supervisor, explained that the Parking Division has continued to enforce metered parking regulations since Governor Sununu’s “Shelter in Place” order was issued in March. However, the Parking Division has done so in a less aggressive manner, and further explained that enforcement resources have been redeployed to focus on neighborhood parking issues, as well as enforcement of handicap and fire lane parking at shopping centers.

Matt Walsh reported that during the period of April 1 – 24, 2020, a total of 309 parking tickets had been issued by the Parking Division, for an average of 13 per day. Of this total, 290 were for meter violations. By comparison, during the period of April 1 – 19, 2019, the City had issued a total of 1,435 parking tickets, of which 1,390 were for meter violations.

Mr. Walsh then discussed revenue impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic on the Parking Fund. Specifically, citation revenue typically is around \$35,000 per month. However, for April, staff is forecasting around \$5,000. Meter revenues typically run around \$105,000 per month. However, for April staff is forecasting around \$15,000 will be collected.

Discussion of FY20 revenue estimates for the Parking Fund ensued. Staff stated that estimates presume the following:

- April: 75% reduction in meter citation revenues; 90% reduction of meter revenues.

- May: 30% reduction in meter citation revenues; 30% reduction in meter revenues. Both are predicated on the Governor rescinding his “Shelter in Place Order” on May 4th as currently planned and downtown business activity returning to “normalcy”.
- June: No reduction of meter citation or meter revenues.

Mr. Walsh emphasized that the COVID 19 situation is very fluid, and therefore extremely challenging to predict at the present time.

After additional discussion, Councilor Todd suggested that City Administration continue to take a less aggressive approach concerning metered parking citations in the downtown area during the Stay at Home Order, especially for customers engaged in take out at downtown restaurants. Councilor Kenison agreed.

- c. **FY2020 Budget:** Matt Walsh, Director of Redevelopment, provided a year-to-date review of the FY20 budget. He reiterated comments about citation and meter revenue reductions in April. Revenues from leases and permits remain strong. However, P-Card revenues will be significantly less than budget due to a reduction in purchases by the State of New Hampshire due to ongoing negotiations with labor unions.

Currently, the Parking fund is projecting a \$258,000+/- loss for FY2020. Prior to the on-set of the COVID 19 Pandemic, it was projected that the Parking Fund would have positive net operating income of around \$20,000.

Councilor Fennessy asked Mr. Walsh to discuss FY20 expenditures, and what steps City Administration was taking to reduce expenses in light of the COVID 19 Pandemic. Mr. Walsh responded that City Administration plans to keep the two vacant Parking Enforcement Officer (PEO) positions open. In addition, a vacant 24-hour per week meter technician position will also remain open. Mr. Walsh added that they have a candidate undergoing the background process for one of the PEO positions, and would be ready to start once the COVID 19 Pandemic subsides. Mr. Walsh also added that City Administration is reducing maintenance of parking garages in order to save money. Overtime has also been eliminated.

Councilor Fennessy also asked for a status report concerning ongoing repairs and renovations at the School Street Garage. Mr. Walsh reported that work was continuing despite the COVID-19 Pandemic as the construction industry has been deemed an essential business. Taking advantage of lighter traffic downtown, the contractor plans to demolish the south stair plaza in the coming days. Also, installation of the curtain wall for the south stair tower is expected to begin on June 22nd and will be completed around August 17th.

4. **FY2021 Budget:**

- a. **Review Preliminary FY2021-2030 Capital Improvement Program:** Matt Walsh provided a brief overview of the preliminary FY2021-2030 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for the Parking System. The total CIP is approximately \$15 million, combined. He noted that this is still preliminary and the final CIP will be included in the City Manager’s FY21 budget, which is scheduled to be released on May 14, 2020. Given the negative financial impacts

of the COVID 19 Pandemic, some capital projects may need to be delayed until parking revenues return to normal.

- b. **Review Replacement Options for On-Street Kiosk Pay Stations:** Mr. Walsh reminded the Parking Committee about previous conversations at the Committee's August 2019 meeting concerning various options for replacement of on-street parking kiosk pay stations.

He noted that City Administration tentatively plans to seek funding from the City Council as part of the FY21 budget to replace all 85 kiosk pay stations, including the 69 units which manage approximately 441 on-street parking spaces. Mr. Walsh reminded the Committee that it had expressed interest in potentially replacing some or all of the on-street kiosks with smart meters.

Mr. Walsh presented a spreadsheet which modeled the capital and operating costs associated with four alternatives for replacing the 69 on-street kiosks, as well as a summary of advantages and disadvantages related thereto.

Councilor Champlin thanked Mr. Walsh for preparing the summary of options and suggested that the Parking Committee review this item in detail during its next meeting.

Councilor Fennessy asked about time constraints associated with the Committee's review of these options. Mr. Walsh stated that the remaining mechanical meters are in poor condition and need to be replaced. However, he suggested that the Committee has time to review kiosk options, as, in the event funds are approved by the City Council, the kiosks would likely not be replaced until spring 2021.

5. **Other Business:**

- It was noted that the Committee's next meeting falls on Memorial Day. It was the consensus of the Parking Committee that it would like to meet in May. Mr. Walsh was tasked with finding an alternative date for the meeting.
- It was noted that March 30th Narrow Streets Public Forum #1 for Zone 1 of the study area (i.e. the Wall Street Neighborhood) was cancelled due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. Mr. Walsh suggested that the Committee reschedule the forum for some time in the fall, pending COVID 19 Pandemic limitations on public meetings. The Committee agreed with this recommendation.
- It was noted that Heather Shank, City Planner, would like to meet with the Parking Committee to discuss potential changes to residential parking requirements currently under consideration as part of the Concord Next Zoning Ordinance Project. Carlos Baia, Deputy City Manager of Development, stated that the Planning Division is in the process of finalizing the proposed ordinance with the Legal Department, and thus a meeting with the Parking Committee would be appropriate. It was the consensus of the Committee to include this item on the agenda for its May meeting.
- Lastly, Mr. Walsh reported that he received a complaint from Martin Greene regarding vehicles parking on grass along the frontage of the Old North Cemetery on Bradley Street. Mr. Walsh stated that parking on the grass is prohibited by City Parking Ordinance 18-1-10,

which states that tires must be on pavement. He noted that this issue was raised during the recent narrow streets discussion with the neighborhood, and suggested the City could install signage with this citation in order to resolve the issue. It was the consensus of the Parking Committee to revisit this issue at a later date.

6. **Adjourned:** Councilor Todd moved to adjourn the meeting. Mayor Bouley seconded. The motion carried on a unanimous roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 6:34 PM.

Respectfully Submitted

Amanda Lombard
Parking Division Fiscal Tech III

Draft