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City Manager

CITY OF CONCORD

New Hampshire's Main Street™

City Manager's Office

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Parking Committee Minutes May 26, 2020

Attendees:

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

Staff:

Matt Walsh, Director of Redevelopment, Downtown Services, & Special Projects
Karen Hill, Transportation Engineer
David Florence Parking Division Supervisor
Amanda Lombard Fiscal Clerk Parking Division
Heather Shank, City Planner

Public:

Greg Lessard, Concord Coalition to End Homelessness
Ellen Groh, Concord Coalition to End Homelessness
Jordan Meher, Property Owner

The meeting began at 5:00 PM

Matt Walsh, Director of Redevelopment, Downtown Services, & Special Projects read the Covid-19 public meetings procedures notice, which explained that, due to the Covid-19 "Coronavirus" 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 utilized 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 April 27, 2020. Councilor Fennessy seconded. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, a roll call vote was conducted. The motion passed unanimously.

3. **Request for Referrals:**

- a. **80 Center Street No Parking Request:** Matt Walsh provided an overview of a request received from Jordan Meher, owner of 80 Centre Street. Mr. Meher has requested that the City remove on-street parking on the north side of Center Street as follows: 20' to the east of his driveway and 10-15' to the west. Mr. Meher has expressed concerns about limited sight distance when exiting his driveway, and explained that the situation becomes more hazardous when vehicles are parked along the frontage of his property.

Karen Hill, City Transportation Engineer, stated she conducted a site visit and agrees that there is a sight distance issue, which is caused by the crest of the hill on Centre Street near Mr. Meher's property. Specifically, she recommended that on-street parking be removed for a distance of 50' from the driveway on the east side and 20' on the westerly side of the driveway. This recommendation would impact approximately three parking spaces.

Councilor Kenison moved that the necessary ordinances be prepared to remove parking at this location in accordance with City Transportation Engineer's recommendation, and submitted to City Council for public hearing. Councilor Todd seconded. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, a roll call vote was conducted. The motion passed unanimously.

- b. **17 School Street Loading Zone Request:** Matt Walsh explained that this request was generated by City Administration. Specifically, staff recommends that a loading zone be created within the surface parking lot off of Warren Street at the School Street Garage.

Mr. Walsh reported that the City is in the process of reconstructing the plaza near the School Street Garage's south stair tower and Warren Street. Mr. Walsh explained that, although this is a pedestrian oriented space, some delivery vehicles access the plaza via a sloped curb area (intended for maintenance vehicles) to make deliveries.

Mr. Walsh explained that the City is investing more than \$160,000 to reconstruct the plaza. Plaza renovations include new concrete sidewalks, which staff would like to protect from large vehicles routinely accessing the plaza for deliveries. Given the desire to protect the new infrastructure, coupled with the pedestrian nature of the space, staff would like to create a formal loading zone parallel within the surface parking lot near Warren Street. It was noted that this area has historically been used informally as a loading zone since the School Street Parking Garage / Capital Plaza Project was completed in 1985.

Vehicular access to the plaza would be restricted with large granite bollards, identical those located on Main Street. The bollards would be relocated by the City as needed to facilitate maintenance activities within the plaza, or for adjacent private properties.

Mr. Walsh reported that he sent a detailed email to the owners of Capital Plaza Concord LLC, 55 North Main Street, and PRM/INEX. No response was received from Capital Plaza or PRM. However, the owner of 55 North Main Street stated that who stated she supported the proposal.

Councilor Fennessy expressed concerns that the proposed loading zone may create traffic issues for vehicles accessing the parking garage or parking spaces within the surface lot. Matt Walsh reviewed schematic drawings of the proposed loading zone. He stated a 24' wide drive isle would be provided to the parking garage between the loading zone and adjacent parking spaces within the surface lot. He also noted that the proposed dimensions for the loading zone and abutting drive are consistent with typical engineering requirements. Councilor Fennessy stated he would like to get more input from the surrounding businesses before a decision is made. He also reiterated his concerns regarding traffic movements in the parking lot associated with the parking garage and proposed loading zone.

Councilor Fennessy moved to table consideration of the loading zone until additional feedback can be secure from adjacent businesses. Councilor Kenison seconded. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, a roll call vote was conducted. The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Concord Next Zoning Update:** Heather Shank, City Planner, provided an update concerning ongoing revisions to the City's Zoning Ordinance. Known as the "Concord Next Project", the revisions will result in the creation of a "form based zoning code" for the City.

As part of this project, it is likely that the City will relax certain land use regulations to encourage additional density in urban and suburban residential neighborhoods. Simultaneously, the City will likely reduce on-site parking requirements for residential properties (including multifamily properties). Therefore, increased demand for on-street parking may occur in these neighborhoods.

Ms. Shank stated that she was seeking the Parking Committee's input on the draft residential parking standards currently under consideration.

Ms. Shank explained that the current zoning ordinance requires two spaces for any unit type in any district in the City. Revisions currently under consideration would create a more graduated approach for parking requirements. Currently, the Planning Division is considering the following standards:

- Single Family: 2 spaces per unit (no change).
- Duplex / Attached Dwellings: 1.5 spaces per unit.
- Multifamily:
 - Generally: 1.0 - 1.25 spaces per unit;
 - Senior Housing: 0.5 - 1.0 spaces per unit;
 - Affordable Housing: 1.0 – 1.25 spaces per unit.

The Committee discussed the proposal and was generally supportive of the concept.

Councilor Champlin asked for public input on the proposal.

Ellen Groh, Executive Director of the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness, stated she thinks this parking proposal would make a positive difference concerning the feasibility of developing affordable housing in the City. She also stated that the proposed changes would reduce the likelihood of affordable housing projects requiring variances from the Zoning Board of Adjustment, thus helping to streamline, as well as reduce the cost, of the development permitting process. Ms. Groh discussed studies that show the cost of adding a parking space is \$5,000-\$10,000 per space, therefore reduction of parking requirements could save development projects significant amounts of money.

Greg Lessard, board member for the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness, noted that the cost of parking spaces at \$5,000-\$10,000 per space translates to about \$200 dollars in rent, thus affecting the affordability of housing units.

5. **FY2020 Budget:**

- a. **Review of April 2020 Year to Date Financial Statement:** Matt Walsh provided an overview of the April 2020 Year-to-Date (YTD) financial statements for Fiscal Year 2020. As of April 30th, approximately 83% of the fiscal year had elapsed.

Revenues YTD were \$2.189 million, or 71% of budget. Revenues are behind budget by approximately 12%. Mr. Walsh noted that total revenues for April were \$60,212, which is significantly below normal due to the Covid 19 "Coronavirus" Pandemic. Typically the City averages \$200,000 or more in revenues monthly. Highlights for the month of April included:

- Meter Revenues: \$23,064. Normally these run \$105,000-\$135,000 per month.
- Parking Penalties (Meter Citations Only): \$14,832. Normally these run around \$30,000-\$35,000 per month.

Expenses YTD were \$2.279 million, or 80% of budget. Mr. Walsh noted that City Administration was making a concerted effort to reduce expenditures in light of significantly reduced revenues caused by the Covid 19 Pandemic. For April, total expenditures were approximately \$136,000, of which \$60,000 were tax payments to the General Fund associated with parking leases and permits.

As of April 30th the Parking Fund was running a deficit of about \$90,000 Thousand dollars for FY2020.

Preliminary Year End Projections for the Parking Fund, prepared in March, estimated total revenues of \$2.485 million and expenses of \$2.74 million, thus resulting in a potential deficit of \$258,000 for FY2020. Mr. Walsh stated that

he believes expenditures will be less than \$2.74 million, thus the projected loss is likely conservative.

The Parking Fund currently has approximately \$675,000 of working capital. Therefore, the Fund will have capacity to absorb losses from FY2020. However, significant, or continued, losses will require the City to re-evaluate future expenditures and opportunities for additional revenue.

Councilor Todd asked whether FY2020 losses could delay future capital projects.

Mr. Walsh responded that loss of revenues, and erosion of the Parking Fund's working capital related thereto, could affect the City's capacity to advance future capital projects. He explained that all parking capital projects in the FY2021 Capital Improvement Program had been "asterisked", meaning that they would not be appropriated as part of the FY2021 budget adoption process this spring. Rather, all projects have been placed on hold until revenue impacts associated with the Covid 19 Pandemic are fully understood.

By way of example, Mr. Walsh noted that City Administration had hoped to begin the \$3.6 million renovation of the State Street Garage in FY2021; however this project was delayed due to financial uncertainty associated with the pandemic. He also noted that staff had hoped to replace all 85 pay station kiosks, as well as the 270 remaining single space mechanical meters, at a cost of \$850,000 in FY2021. However, this project has also been delayed due to revenue uncertainty associated with the Covid 19 pandemic. Other projects will be going forward, such as the \$1.06 million renovation of the Storrs Street Garage, as debt service for that project was sold in January.

6. FY2021 Budget:

- a. **Review of Proposed FY2021-2030 Capital Improvement Program ("CIP"):**
Matt Walsh provided a project by project overview of the FY2021-2030 Capital Improvement Program for the Parking Division. He reiterated that all FY21 projects had been "asterisked" due to revenue impacts on the Parking Fund associated with the Covid 19 pandemic.
- b. **Discussion of Replacement Options for On-Street Kiosk Pay Stations:**
Discussion ensued concerning replacement of the 85 kiosk pay stations and 270 single space mechanical meters.

Members of the Parking Committee expressed a strong desire to replace this infrastructure as soon as possible. They also expressed concerns that revenue losses associated with the Covid 19 pandemic may delay this project.

Mr. Walsh reviewed the \$850,000 budget for the project. He explained that \$650,000 was for replacement of the 85 kiosk units, and presumed full replacement of the kiosks (i.e. cabinets, decals, and electronic components).

He noted that the City would significantly reduce this cost by keeping and retrofitting existing kiosk housings with new electrical components. The remaining \$200,000 was for the replacement of single space mechanical meters with smart meters.

Mr. Walsh noted that, in the past, the Parking Committee had suggested it might be interested in replacing on-street kiosk units with single space smart meters. Mr. Walsh noted that there are 69 on-street kiosks which manage approximately 411 parking spaces. He noted that staff had prepared financial analysis of this potential option, which was provided to the Parking Committee in April. Mr. Walsh explained that this issue needs more discussion by the Parking Committee, as there are significant issues which need to be vetted if the City were to move forward with this option.

Members of the Committee stated replacing the meters and kiosks are a high priority for the community, both to improve revenues by getting newer, more reliable equipment, but also to improve customer service. Discussion ensued about potential creative options to replace the infrastructure.

Councilor Fennessy stated that he would support removal of the recently installed 300+/- single space meters from the Meter Expansion zones around downtown to replace existing infrastructure. He stated that he did not believe these meters were generating meaningful revenues, and that using them to replace other existing infrastructure would be in the City's best interest.

Mr. Walsh provided a brief history of meter expansion. He noted that Phase II of the expansion added approximately 300 smart meters on previously unmetered streets throughout downtown. He explained the expansion was completed around January 15th. He noted that the Covid 19 pandemic, and associated emergency stay at home orders, began in mid-March. These circumstances had significant negative revenues impacts on meter expansion zones. Mr. Walsh further added that an extrapolated analysis of February 2020 revenues and expenditures for the Meter Expansion area suggests that the meters generate approximately \$60,000 in net operating income after debt service and operating expenses. He further noted that meter expansion was conducted to 1) manage parking around certain downtown activity generators (court houses, Capitol Center for the Arts, etc.), as well as grow parking revenues, thereby helping the City with the cost of repairs and renovations of parking garages, as well as replacement kiosk and meter infrastructure.

Mr. Walsh explained that a decision to terminate meter expansion areas will have a negative financial impact on the Parking Fund and might necessitate a review of other revenue generation options which the Parking Committee as part of the 2017 Strategic Planning process, but not pursued by the Parking Committee at that time.

Lastly, Mr. Walsh noted that existing kiosks and single space meters manage 711 on-street parking spaces, combined. If the City were to remove the 300 meters from the meter expansion zones, the City will still need to acquire additional kiosks or meters for the remaining 411 spaces.

Discussion ensued about other creative options to finance kiosk and meter replacement. Mr. Walsh noted that construction of the renovations of the Storrs Street Parking Garage (CIP 529/FY2020) had not yet begun and hypothesized that it might be possible to suspend that project and use the bonded funds (which were sold in January 2020) to finance meter replacement. He explained that some funds had already been expended on design services. He also hypothesized that any funds not already spent on design, and available after meter replacement, could be allocated for the most urgent needs in the Storrs Street Garage.

Discussion ensued. Councilors Kenison and Todd expressed reluctance to terminate the meter expansion zones and voiced support for reprogramming Storrs Street moneys for meter and kiosk replacement. Councilor Fennessy stated he would not support this proposal.

Councilor Kenison moved to recommend that the City Council reallocate up to \$850,000 from the Storrs Street Garage Renovation (CIP 529 / FY2020) to Meter and Kiosk Replacement CIP 595/2021 to replace the City's 85 kiosk pay stations and remaining 270 single space mechanical meters. Councilor Todd seconded. Discussion ensued. Councilor Fennessy reiterated his opposition to the proposal. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, a roll call vote has conducted. The motion passed 3 to 1 (Fennessy).

7. **Other Business:** None.
8. **Adjourned:** Councilor Todd moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilor Fennessy seconded. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, a roll call vote has conducted. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:54 PM.

Respectfully Submitted

Amanda Lombard
Parking Division Fiscal Tech III