



CITY OF CONCORD

New Hampshire's Main Street™

City Manager's Office

41 Green Street, Concord NH 03301

(603) 225-8570

Thomas J. Aspell, Jr.
City Manager

Parking Committee Minutes

February 24, 2020

Attendees:

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

Staff:

Matt Walsh, Director of Redevelopment, Downtown Services, & Special Projects
Carlos Baia, Deputy City Manager of Development
David Florence, Parking Supervisor
Amanda Lombard, Fiscal Technician Parking Division

Public:

Tim Sink, President, Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce
Johane Telgener, President, Intown Concord, Inc.
Michael Herrmann, Owner, Gibson's Bookstore and Intown Concord, Inc. Board Member

The meeting began at 5:03 PM

1. **Overview of Agenda:** Councilor Champlin provided an overview of the meeting agenda and welcomed members of the public.
2. **Adoption of Minutes:** Councilor Kenison moved to adopt the minutes of January 27, 2020. Councilor Todd seconded. The minutes were adopted as presented on a unanimous voice vote.
3. **Review of Intown Concord, Inc.'s and Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce's Downtown Parking Survey:** Tim Sink, President of the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, addressed the Parking Committee and presented the results of Intown Concord Inc.'s Downtown Parking Survey, which was distributed to all Downtown businesses. This was a continuation of a discussion between Intown Concord, the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, and the Parking Committee, which began at the Committee's November 25, 2019 meeting.

Mr. Sink reported there were 43 responses to the survey. Approximately 65% of respondents had less than five employees, the majority of which were part-time. Twenty-six respondents (or 60%) were retail establishments. He noted that 72% of respondents reported they do not provide any financial assistance to their employees concerning parking costs. Approximately 51% of respondents indicated their average wage was less than fifteen dollars per hour.

Mr. Sink briefly recapped the November 25, 2019 discussion with the Parking Committee. He reiterated that Intown Concord and Chamber of Commerce are requesting that the City consider the following options concerning on-street parking meters recently installed on Storrs Street between Theatre and South Main Streets:

- Option 1: Remove the meters and re-establish free parking. He suggested that the newly installed meters could be used to replace older mechanical meters elsewhere in Downtown; or,
- Option 2: Alternatively, Mr. Sink asked the Parking Committee to consider lowering the cost of parking from \$1.00 per hour to \$0.50 per hour.

Mr. Sink also revisited his previous discussion of vacant lease spaces in the City's Storrs Street Parking Garage. He suggested the City should make those spaces available to the public, perhaps through a permit program. Mr. Sink also stated that he thought that the City's recent conversion of the State Street Garage from leases to permits was successful.

Lastly, Tim Sink discussed the State of New Hampshire's Legislative Parking Garage. He noted that the garage is vacant on nights and weekends. He suggested those spaces should be made available to the public when the facility is not being used by the State of New Hampshire.

Michael Herrmann, owner of Gibson's Bookstore and member of the Intown Concord, Inc.'s Board of Directors, discussed the newly installed parking meters on Storrs Street between Theatre and South Main Streets. He stated that the issue was not free parking, but that the spaces were being used by 1) people that could afford to pay for parking or 2) people who already had reserved parking spaces elsewhere (including within the Storrs Street Garage) but choose not to use them. He suggested that installation of parking meters on this section of Storrs Street has resulted in more people utilizing free parking in nearby neighborhoods, as well as the Capitol Shopping Plaza (a.k.a. Market Basket Plaza) parking lot. He suggested that the City consider creating a parking permit exclusively for lower wage Downtown employees for use either on-street or within the City's parking garages.

Councilor Kenison discussed the on-street permit concept. She noted that the City currently has on-street residential permits for a few streets near the UNH School of Law. She also noted that the City has historically been reluctant to expand on-street permit programs, which would create exclusive rights for permit holders to use on-street public parking, as that is an inefficient use of public parking.

Councilor Todd commented on Tim Sink's suggestion to use the Legislative Parking Garage for public parking and stated it would be interesting to determine how many people might potentially use the garage if it were made available to the public. Mr. Sink replied that he shared Councilor Todd's curiosity; however, he currently does not have an estimate.

Councilor Champlin noted that the survey results revealed that some employees routinely park on Main Street. This means that those employees not only have the financial means to pay for parking, but also that these employees might be engaged in meter feeding. In addition, Councilor Champlin expressed frustration about this practice, as use of prime on-street spaces by employees means that these spaces are not available for patrons of downtown businesses (thus harming downtown businesses). Councilor Champlin further elaborated that he does not believe restoring free parking on Storrs Street, between Theatre and South Main Streets, will curb the practice of downtown employees inappropriately using prime on-street parking spaces. He reiterated that he sees employee parking as a long term problem and would like to find a long term solution. He also noted that during the Committee's January 27, 2020 meeting, the Mayor suggested that the City should remove the new meters within the meter expansion zones due to a perception that these spaces were not being used or generating income. However, the Parking Committee unanimously felt that any potential changes to the meter expansion zones should be delayed until such time as revenue data became available.

Matt Walsh, Director of Redevelopment, thanked Intown Concord for doing the survey and appreciates the information. He stated his opinion that a response rate of only 43 respondents was very low. He noted that in 2001, there were 401 businesses located in the Downtown central business district. He hypothesized that this figure has likely increased over the past 19 years due to redevelopment on South Main Street, as well as other factors. Therefore, a response rate of only 43 businesses was very low. Tim Sink stated that he was uncertain how many businesses were presently located in Downtown and stated that the survey was targeted to mostly retail businesses.

Matt Walsh thanked Mr. Sink for his comments about the successful transition from leases to permits in the State Street Garage. Mr. Walsh noted that transition occurred in July 2018 (i.e. City FY2019). However, Mr. Walsh drew a key distinction between the State Street Garage and City's Storrs Street Garage. Specifically, he explained the City was able to implement the transition within the State Street Garage quickly and easily, as there were no long-term lease agreements encumbering that facility. However, the Storrs Street Garage has four long-term lease agreements, which the City would have to renegotiate in order to implement a permit system. Mr. Walsh added that discussions have been ongoing with the long-term lease holders and expressed cautious optimism that final agreements to transition to a permit system might be reached in spring / summer of 2021.

Mr. Walsh briefly reviewed concepts for how a permit program might be structured for the Storrs Street Garage and asked Mr. Sink and Mr. Hermann for their thoughts regarding how much a retail employee might be willing to pay for permit parking. Mr. Sink indicated \$50 per month. However, Mr. Hermann disputed that amount, and suggested that \$50 / month would be too expensive.

Mr. Walsh also discussed the concept of an on-street parking permit. He noted that other communities offer a similar permit, and specifically discussed Manchester's on-street permit for the Mill Yard. He recounted that City Administration had previously recommended this type of permit for Storrs Street between Theatre and South Main Street back in 2014. However, that option was rejected by the City Council at the time. Mr. Walsh explained that there would be a variety of issues associated with permits that would require review. These included potential legal complications associated with issuing permits exclusively to lower income downtown workers. He also noted that a specific geography would have to be created for the permits and suggested that it might be prudent to limit permits to certain areas of the City's 10 hour on-street meter zones. He also discussed the logistical challenges associated with issuing and managing said such permits. He suggested the administrative viability of this concept might be improved if the City developed the capability of accepting on-line payments linked to credit cards or bank accounts of the permit holders.

Lastly, Mr. Walsh noted that the Chamber of Commerce controls approximately 45 spaces in the Capitol Shopping Plaza, which it leases to downtown businesses. He suggested that the Chamber address its concerns about dedicated parking for lower wage employees by restructuring its management of these spaces. Specifically, the Chamber could convert its lease program for their spaces to a permit system targeted to low income downtown employees, thereby achieving their goal without any City involvement. And because the Chamber is a private entity, it could likely avoid any issues associated with offering these spaces exclusively to lower wage downtown employees.

Councilor Champlin asked when revenue data would be available for the meter expansion zones. David Florence, Parking Manager, discussed the process staff will have to undergo to compile the data, and noted that it will involve manually compiling data from each individual meter, as well as PayByPhone databases.

Councilor Fennessey asked whether citation information could be provided for the meter enforcement zones. Mr. Florence explained the data could be gathered, but would be very onerous due to the software program used to manage citations.

Councilor Champlin thanked the Chamber of Commerce and Intown Concord, Inc. for attending the meeting. He asked staff for input about a potential schedule for conducting revenue analyses for the meter expansion zone, as well as

formal review of the Chamber and Intown's policy suggestions. Mr. Walsh stated that staff should be able to return to the Parking Committee in April or May with a report.

4. **PayByPhone App Implementation Update:** Matt Walsh, Director of Redevelopment, stated the PayByPhone mobile payment application ("app") went live on February 3, 2020. To date, approximately 4,200 transactions had been processed, with total revenues around \$10,200. Of this total, approximately \$9,000 would accrue to the City and the rest would be retained by PayByPhone.

He also reported that there are a few glitches with the app, which PayByPhone is working to address. For example, if a license plate includes a zero, the app automatically converts it to the letter "O". In addition, despite contractual obligations, PayByPhone is still unable to process license plates which contain the "+", "-", and "&" symbols. Lastly, the app does not allow users to pre-pay before meter enforcement begins at 9:00AM.

Mr. Walsh noted that the app has led to some meter feeding issues. Specifically, some users are trying to trick the system by paying for the zone they are parked in, and when they hit the maximum time limit, they input payment for another zone without moving their vehicle.

5. **January 31, 2020 Year to Date Financial Statement:** Mr. Walsh stated that as of January 31st 58% of the fiscal year had elapsed.

- a. **Revenues:** He noted that meter revenues year to date (YTD) were at 52% of budget. He noted that meter expansion Phase II was recently completed in mid-January and that it will be interesting to see what impacts a full month of revenue from these new meters will have on the upcoming February financial statements.

Parking citations were at 22% of budget YTD (which is 26% behind budget). Mr. Walsh noted that citation revenues are significantly less than budget because the Parking Division has two vacant Parking Enforcement Officer (PEOs) positions, that PEOs have been covering the Police Department's reception desk due to a recent retirement, and that a PEO is currently performing meter technician duties on a part-time basis as the newly created part-time tech position has not yet been filled.

Mr. Walsh reminded the Parking Committee that revenues from non-meter tickets (i.e. citations for winter snow ban violations, parking too close to driveways or intersections, etc.) continues to accrue to the General Fund, and is not included in these financial statements.

Overall, total revenues year to date (YTD) were at 55% of budget (which is 3% less than budget).

- b. **Expenditures:** Total expenditures are 67% of budget YTD. This is generally associated with the timing of property tax and debt service payments for the Parking Fund.

6. **Other Business:** It was noted that the initial public forum for Zone 1 of the Narrow Streets study area is scheduled for March 30th at 7:00PM in the City Council Chambers.

7. **Adjourned:** Councilor Champlin moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilor Todd Seconded. The meeting adjourned at 6:08 PM.

Respectfully Submitted

Amanda Lombard
Parking Division Fiscal Tech III