

**PARKING ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
July 9, 2013**

Members Present:

Don Olsen, Chairperson
Steve Bruggeman
Tabitha Frasca

Leticia Moore
Bob Carr

Mike Craighill
Joni Harman

Members Absent:

Will Gilbert

Others Present:

Bruce McCandless
Megan Hodson

Liz Kampa-Weatherwax

Saree Couture

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Don called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. As Tabitha Frasca and Joni Harman are new to the Parking Board, everyone introduced themselves.

MINUTES

Leticia moved to approve the June minutes. Steve seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.

REPORTS

Monthly Reports

Saree explained there were a couple items missing on the report because she needed more information on them. She said the cash sales were down by about \$1,000 from prior month. Leticia asked Saree if she knew why the assigned spaces in Park 2 are showing more vacancies. Saree said the assigned space is actually supposed to be 80 instead of 8 spaces. Don asked in the future if the Monthly Report could be included in the Agenda packet, so the Board has time to review it.

Bruce said Parking received a rebate check for the high efficiency lighting improvements that were made to Park 1 and Park 2 garages. He said Park 3 is completed, but Parking will not see the rebate check until City Hall is completed. Saree said when the project is finished the City will see \$522,000 in rebates. Saree added the Empire Garage will also incorporate high efficiency lighting in the new construction.

Steve asked what was budgeted for the rebate. Bruce believes it was \$160,000.

Meter Zone Map

Bruce said City Code states City Council will determine where meters will be placed in the metered zone, which is an area where there must be meters. He said the City Administrator is responsible for getting the meters installed and also deciding what time limit will be placed on the meters.

Bruce asked the Board if there are any areas on the map they would like to change, and, if not, is the Board ready to take the map to Council for approval. Leticia believes the Board should go to Council and

ask for the code to be changed to say "may" instead of "must". Leticia asked if the posted signed parking is allowed in the metered zone. Liz said as the code is written, Staff and the Board are not allowed to make changes to parking in the metered zone. Only Council has the authority. Steve recommended changing the code before a Commission is formed. Don said his concern is if a Commission is not formed, there is a strong likelihood Parking will be privatized, but that is not guaranteed.

Bruce said he would prefer changing the language in the code, and if Council does not approve the change, the Board can come back with the modification to the map. Don agreed, but asked if it could happen together instead of going through the whole process again. Bruce said he would try to figure out a way to present it to Council. Liz said whether the code gets changed from "must" to "may", Staff and the Board would still have to go to Council for any changes to parking downtown and receive approval.

Bruce said he would like City Council to give authority to the City Administrator to make decisions outside of the metered zone, and in turn the City Administrator would delegate the authority to Staff. Steve asked if the changes would be for two separate codes. Bruce said yes. Steve asked if the Board could go to Council and recommend changing the codes both within and outside the zone and list the reasons why. Bruce said yes. Mike agreed to change the "must" to "may", but did not agree with giving one body the authority of approving or disapproving independent businesses from getting variances that they are asking for. He stated there is a process that should play out. Leticia said downtown is public shared parking, and on the west end there are different rules for parking, which require businesses to have on-site parking based on the type of business.

Leticia motioned to ask the City Council to change the current code that states there "must be meters in the metered area" to "may be meters in the metered area", offer Council the Board's current map as an example of the Board's intent going forward, and ask for support for the Board's request. Steve seconded. All in favor. The motioned passed.

Empire Parking Garage Update

Bruce said the construction is finally out of the ground and going vertical. Some of the columns and walls have been formed. He said the construction crew is planning on starting the first deck in a month. Bruce said instead of bringing cranes in and out when needed, the crew plans on installing a tower crane, which will be there the entire time of construction.

Bruce said the City received an unsolicited offer to purchase the corner retail space on the corner of Montana Avenue and North 27th Street. He explained when the City purchased the property from Bill Honaker and the Northern Hotel they both took options to purchase the two corner properties. In addition, Mr. Honaker had the option to purchase anything else. Bruce said Mr. Honaker gave up his right to purchase, but retains the first right of refusal to match any other offer the City receives on the rest of the retail space. The City has not actively marketed the retail space because the City has been working with Mr. Honaker and the Nelson brothers to see if they would take the spaces they have the options for. Bruce said, in the meantime, the City received the unsolicited offer, which is \$251,000 for approximately 5,000 square feet. Bruce said it will go to City Council on July 22nd for their consideration. He said there is a process when the City sells property. Don said (the offer) is about \$50 per square foot. Mike asked how much total retail space will be in the Empire. Bruce believes the total retail space is approximately 16,500 square feet. He added there could be 8 spaces that will be flexible in size because of the columns.

Informational Items - Credit Cards, Park 2 Control Cards, Northern Hotel/1st Ave N parking meters

Liz asked Pat Weber, Finance Director, when he comes to the next Board meeting to discuss the reasons why the rules are in place for the credit card transactions. She explained to Mr. Weber the Board's suggestion on the tokens or opting out of the City paying the credit card processing fee. Liz said he will discuss and explain this to the Board at next month's meeting.

Don asked if Parking is currently taking credit cards and what the minimum amount is. Liz said yes, Parking is taking credit cards and the minimum is \$5. Saree added "with some discretion."

Megan stated the Park 2 control cards shortage has been fixed for the time being.

Saree said she was advised from the Street/Traffic division that she needed to contact the State about the meters being replaced in front of the Northern Hotel on 1st Avenue North. The State told her she needed to send a letter to Helena to receive approval before having the meters replaced because it is a State right of way. She has a letter drafted and will help push the process along.

DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE REPORT

Lisa and Greg did not attend the meeting, so there was no report.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

AGENDA

10 Hour Signed Permit Only Parking

Bruce said the City Attorney said City Council can adopt the resolution of where the Board wants to put the 10 hour signed permit parking and the authority to charge a fee. He said Staff and the Board would also have to amend the resolution of setting fees for the 10 hour signed permit parking.

The Board looked at the finalized map of where they wanted the 10 hour signed permit only parking. Bruce said he had two questions: are the areas what the Board wants Council to approve, or does the Board want Council to change the code to grant authority to the City Administrator. Don said the designated areas on the map are what the Board had discussed in previous meetings. Leticia said the area in the west is where the 10 hour meters were before the Board made the change to the metered zone.

Bruce asked the Board if they would like to put in 10 hour signed permit only parking on South 26th St and South 25th Street between Minnesota Ave and 1st Ave South. He said currently those streets are free parking, and in a year the Skate Park Lot will be reopened to the public.

Leticia motioned to leave the cross streets south of Minnesota Avenue between South 27th Street and South 24th Street, and put in 10 hour signed permit parking in the areas designated on the map. Mike seconded. Joni asked why the Board is going against the Old Town plan that was approved by City Council. Don said the original plan would have been 10 hour meters instead of 10 hour signed parking, and it did not happen because of the bike path. Leticia said as for the whole downtown area, the PAB was trying to reduce enforcement. Bruce asked if the Board would like to charge the same price for the permits, which is \$15. The Board agreed. All in favor. Motioned passed.

Special Requests for parking outside of the Metered Zone

Saree explained Liz and herself scheduled a meeting with Bob Marvin regarding the Minnesota Avenue layout. The Board looked at two options that Mr. Marvin provided. Saree believes the first option is the best scenario. The first option has the diagonal parking on the north side of Minnesota Avenue and would allow for 34 spaces. She explained the second option would put the diagonal parking on the south side of Minnesota Avenue and would allow for 35 spaces. Saree said option two would make the center lane curve, and she does not feel that it would establish good traffic flow.

Liz explained Staff wanted to show the Board the tentative draft form of Minnesota Avenue. She also wanted to let the Board know Staff is moving forward with the diagonal parking and 2 hour signed parking. Liz said the design and installation will run around \$7,000-\$9,000. Staff asked Mr. Marvin to split the cost, because the DPB/DBA offered to pay for the installation of the signs if Parking paid for the design. Saree said Staff suggested the far right side of the diagonal parking to be made into a handicap space.

Don asked if there was a timeframe for getting the project done. Liz believes approximately a month. The Board gave their support for option one.

Saree explained Parking has been receiving Special Parking Applications. Liz said Accent Print Shop submitted an application originally requesting parking, across from their business on North 32nd between 1st Avenue North and Montana Avenue, be changed back to 2 hour signed parking. She said, when Staff arrived on-site, Staff explained to Kris Schaffer, owner of Accent Print Shop, that her request was unlikely to be granted. Ms. Schaffer then amended her request to change the Loading Zone on the very southeast side of North 32nd Street to a 10 minute signed parking space. Liz said the code only allows two 10 minute spaces per block, so Staff recommended changing the Loading Zone to a 2 hour signed parking space. Ms. Schaffer agreed to the recommendation.

Liz explained, in the past, Parking would receive approval from the PAB and would handle the process. She said now Staff needs the PAB's approval for the recommendation along with Council's approval. Mike said he told Ms. Schaffer to come to the Board meetings when the meter trial was happening to discuss her parking problems. Liz believed Ms. Schaffer was having problems with parking even before the trial. Liz asked the Board for their approval of Staff's recommendation and for it to be added to the items going to Council.

Leticia motioned to take to Council Staff's recommendation of converting the southeast Loading Zone space on North 32nd Street between Montana Avenue and 1st Avenue North to a 2 hour signed parking space. Steve seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.

Parking Commission

Bruce said City Council adopted on second reading, the ordinance that will be put in front of voters in November, to allow Council to create administrative boards such as a Parking Commission. Bruce spoke with Tina Volek, City Administrator, regarding the Board and Council having joint meetings, and Tina asked the Board to make a presentation to City Council at one of the work sessions. He said the Board would discuss with Council what the issues are and develop a transition plan into a Parking Commission. Bruce said the Board would ask for a Councilmember to work with the PAB on developing suggestions on the way Staff would handle the transition issues.

Bruce said he went through the statutes and summarized what each statute said. He said the Board does not have to make any decisions right now. He would like the Board to look over the list, and then discuss it with City Council.

Don said he has concerns with item #5 “BID Board may function as Parking Commission”. He said the PAB is allowed to discuss parking areas outside of the CBD, and if the BID transitions as the Parking Commission, that will limit the area for discussion. Bruce said these are all topics that need to be considered. Steve said the BID still wants to be involved with Parking in some way. Steve asked if the BID is allowed to contract with Parking even though there are areas outside the BID jurisdiction.

Leticia asked if there is any money for campaigning for this amendment. She stated if she was not involved on the Board and saw this item on the ballot, she would not vote “yes” for it. Leticia asked if there will be any informational campaign to try to educate people. Bruce said State law prohibits using public funds to support or defeat ballot issues. He said if the Board stays neutral, they can use City funds to put the information out there. He said Staff would not do the campaigning on its own though.

Steve asked if the ordinance will be written very general, to allow the City Charter to be changed to authorize a Commission, with no mention of Parking. Bruce said that is correct. Steve said if the Board starts campaigning and mentioning Parking, there are a lot of people who will vote “no” on the ballot. Steve said the amendment is not only for Parking and it would allow any Commission to have authority.

Bruce said he would present a very brief presentation to Council on July 15th at the Council’s work session. He would like to present everything else on August 12th to City Council.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:47 p.m.