

**PARKING COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
9:30 AM –Friday, November 3, 2006
City Manager’s Conference Room**

DRAFT

I. CALL TO ORDER:

City Manager called the meeting to order at approximately 9:35 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Councilor Ken Smith, Chairman
John P. Bohenko, City Manager
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director
Deputy Police Chief Len DiSesa
Jon Frederick, Parking Manager
Andrew Purgiel

Also present were Mayor Steve Marchand, David Holden, Planning Director, Debbie Finnigan, Traffic Engineer, Tim Cherry, Parking Garage Office Manager and Ruth Bowen, Administrative Assistant and Charles Cullen of The Consulting Engineers Group from Cincinnati, OH.

III. OLD BUSINESS:

- (A) **Parking Study – Meeting with Parking Consultant** – Steve Parkinson introduced the Consultant Charles Cullen who conducted the three Technical Reports dealing with three specific areas of the parking operations and is here today to go over the reports. Mr. Cullen stated the next phase would be to do whatever editing or comments and then put together a final report which will incorporate all three reports.

The City Manager referred to the Memorandum Jon Frederick provided everyone regarding the review of the March 2005 Study and suggested going through the report and discuss some of the issues. Would like to assign priorities A, B or C’s to them, some may require Ordinance changes, administratively handle and need to work on them.

**Technical Report #1 – Parking Rate Evaluation
Recommendations**

1. Conduct a biennial review of parking rates and policies. Mr. Cullen stated what we are looking for is to evaluate where you want the Parking program to be at least every two years to see if you are trying to support downtown businesses, you want turnover of parking spaces and if rates are established so you aren’t getting the turnover you need, either off-street or on-street, you may need to adjust rates and looked

at every other year to make sure that the rates are doing what they are suppose to.

City Manager stated that instead of review, “audit of parking rates and policies” and would this be done internally? Mr. Cullen recommended in-house. How many cars are parking there, how long are they staying? City Manager suggested this be a “Priority A” set a schedule to be looked at every two years and in October review with the Parking Committee and set a date so we have it the same time each year for recommendations to City Council the rates are fine or need to be adjusted. **Priority A**

2. Expand the use of a flat rate. **Priority C**

- \$4 flat fee when large numbers of customers will enter or exit the garage

The Manager stated we do that informally now, we do this with First Night, Children’s Day, Market Square Day, 5 or 6 times/year. How would we standardize this and from an operational standpoint what have you observed.

Mr. Cullen stated that one of the largest concerns is the fact when you have 200-300 people at the Music Hall trying to exit the garage at one time.

Tim Cherry stated he wasn’t in favor of picking and choosing nights for the flat rat and charging everybody because the Music Hall is having a show and 200 people will attend but agreed when having multiple events. The City Manager suggested this be a “C” priority because we do this already and need to probably do over time, if someone in the booth sees a backup past a certain level, are the days marked that we see this? Tim Cherry responded a record is kept when they have to open the gates.

The City Manager suggested working with the various venues in town to determine if we want to have a policy on flat rates. The City Manager expressed the need to know how many times per year we bring up the gate. We know have a standard policy that if it backs up to a certain level, we open the gates to let people out

3. Establish a daily maximum rate. **Priority A**

- Most facilities adopt a maximum daily fee limiting the financial burden of the customer, thereby providing a certain level of comfort.
- \$10 recommended.

The City Manager stated this is pretty straight forward and that a maximum rate would be acceptable, an “A priority”.

4. Impose different hourly rate for on and off-street parking. **Priority B**

- The convenience of on-street parking should be reflected in its rate and should be higher than off-street parking. The Chair stated this is to get people to use the parking facilities as opposed to using the meters. The City Manager stated this had been discussed before during the

budget process. From a policy perspective the City Council felt it should be \$.75 both on and off street.

Mayor Marchand felt that there may be more interest in that price differentiation than there was a few years ago. Driving people into the garage is a higher priority than you may have seen a couple of years ago. Before doing this, the City Manager would like to see as part of this, feels it is important that this should coincide with replacement of meters where we may use some kind of swiper card because we can't go much higher on the street using coins, it is becoming problematic and thinks this should be a B Priority and is something we should be looking at when replacing the meters, which will need to do as the meters are now approx. 10 years old. Go to a \$1.00 on the street and \$.75 in the garage.

Steve Parkinson said our meters are well maintained by Mike Casad, but over time the components start to break down and repair costs increase. The City Manager would like replacement of meters put in the 2009 Capital Plan. Mr. Cullen referred to the recommendation of testing pay by space or pay and display. The City Manager stated this involves a lot of education. Pay and display units can accept credit or debit cards.

City Manager suggested researching this over the next 12 months and see what would be best for us to use. There was discussion about a pilot program on pay and display at Parrott Ave. parking lot and asked about a pilot program at the Parrott Ave. lot pay and display and ends at 6:00 p.m. Ken Smith stated at the same time the Parking Committee look into the neighborhood sticker program and tie these two together. The City Manager summarized this to leave as a B priority, put in next year's Capital Plan and think about what type of technology we want to use on the street.

Steve Parkinson said that a project is being included for pay and display or something that would be applicable to the Parrott Ave. site and suggested not doing the meters all in one year, replace them over a series of years.

Mayor Marchand stated something to think about going forward is 2-part. 1. At what point can you have coins as an option, people don't have that much change on them? and 2. As we move forward besides the financial part which is very real, the policy part of what strategies are most likely to get people off the on-street parking spot for a long period of time and get them into the garage? People want to know how to cut down on some of the congestion of people looking for a parking space rather than people trying to get somewhere.

5. Establish a formulaic relationship between hourly and contract parking. – **Priority A**
 - \$125 for the 24-hour permit (currently \$100)
 - \$100 for the day permit (currently \$800)

- \$62.50 for the night permit (currently \$50)

The last time rates were adjusted there was a change in the hourly rate, but the monthly contract rate stayed the same. The number of hourly customers has gone down and contract parkers went up. The City Manager asked the Councilors present how they would feel about bringing this forward and the timing. The Chair responded the same time as the biennial parking review.

6. Night contract permit – **Priority C**

- Establish the upper most section of the roof as a residential zone (-35 spaces) with 24-7 access on first-come, first-serve basis.

The City Manager stated this is a policy decision and asked Steve Parkinson what he has heard from downtown residents. Steve responded that most people are using the Parrott Ave. lot. There is more all night time need as we are getting more and more downtown residents.

Ruth Bowen believes a lot of the current 24-hour leases are only being used Monday - Friday to accommodate the 7:00 deadline and not using the pass on Sat. and Sun.

**Technical Report #2 – Service Delivery Evaluation
Recommendations**

1. Consider centralizing the parking function as much as possible - **Priority B**

The City Manager thinks we are in this mode now, this is an A Priority that we are already in the process of doing. Mr. Cullen recommended that all of parking should be in a single location in the downtown area, makes sense to have everyone in one location. The City Manager stated this is the ultimate goal and is a matter of internal controls that have to be looked at. City Manager stated given these circumstances mark this as a B priority.

Steve Parkinson stated one of the things we were thinking of looking into is some means for accepting the envelopes of fines in a drop box near the garage for people who got a ticket downtown could go to the garage to drop into the box.

The City Manager stated the need to look into the state laws relating to fees we need to pay to the card companies. One of the ways to start it is at the Intermodal, maybe look at something like this.

2. Commence funding a capital budget program to replace/upgrade both on and off street equipment. City Manager stated this is **Priority A**.
3. Install mirrors and warning lights at the two exit lanes on Hanover Street upon completion of the new bus loading center. The Chair's thought is a **Priority A**. Mr. Cullen recommended reevaluating this.

Steve Parkinson stated that the sidewalk is now far enough away from the garage exit and therefore, mirrors are not needed. Pedestrian passage is much safer now.

4. Eliminate on-street parking on the north side of Hanover Street across from the garage westward to High Street after 7pm - **Priority C**
The City Manager stated this is a policy decision coupled with an operational issue and would like to hear from the staff.
Tim Cherry said this is something that has been talked about for quite sometime on busy nights such as Fri, Sat. nights to have that lane that people can go by if they are not waiting to get into the garage.
The Chair suggested this as a Priority C and to continue to evaluate.
 - Improve traffic flow during peak periods – The Chair stated this has been completed.
5. Modify the exit at Fleet Street to accommodate transient customers.
The Chair stated this has been completed.
 - Consider a pay-in-lane unit.
6. With a Fleet Street transient exit, provide an alternate route for parkers exiting levels 2-4 to use that exit.
Steve Parkinson stated this is internal to the garage, trying to eliminate cross traffic. The Chair recommended this a **Priority C**.
7. Establish a permanent plan to assist outbound traffic from the garage onto Hanover St. during peak existing periods. This essentially is part of No.6. **Priority C**.
8. Adopt a Special event mode of operation on weekend evenings or when more than 200 customers would be expected to exit at the same time. This applies under the \$4.00 special event rate which was marked as priority “C”. Jon Frederick referred to a concert being held at the Music Hall and that an officer will be there to assist traffic existing at the end of the concert. The traffic back up on Hanover St. is where the problem lies and see how this works. The Chair suggested this be a **Priority B** and Jon Frederick will report back. Deputy Police Chief DiSesa stated that they will have all traffic existing left to go down to Maplewood and see how this works.
9. Upgrade equipment with completion of the new garage. This depends on when the new garage goes in. **Priority C**
10. Investigate and test Pay & Display equipment – This has been discussed and is in the Capital Plan. **Priority B**.

11. Monitor the Parcsmart program in other cities.
 - Special credit card that can be used as a credit card I participating businesses and for parking meters. – The City Manager stated this would be in conjunction with No.10. The Consultant is not opposed to this but doesn't recommend it to his clients at this time. This is a **Priority C**.

Technical Report #3 – Parking Program Development Recommendations

Parking Asset Analysis:

- The Gaslight Company, Hilton Garden Inn, Sheraton Hotel Expansion and Eagle Photo site development result in an unmet parking demand of 804 spaces. The Chair stated this is an on-going issue. Mr. Cullen stated this was not a recommendation, basically what does the parking situation look like now and in the next several years and they saw a shortage of parking if all the development took place. There are some opportunities to address this. The City Manager stated that they are in the process of looking at the northern tier parking garage where the Sheraton surface lot is. The Chair suggested a **Priority C**. Steve Parkinson stated it is a two fold issue, the actual demand of parking **Priority C** plus the valuation of our asset in the parking garage, the maintenance issues **Priority A**. The City Manager suggested this be broken into two sections, the first being a Priority C and the 2nd one a Priority A.
- Several maintenance issues (leaking expansion joints, rusted support beams) I the high/Hanover Garage, if not addressed, will decrease the useful life of the facility and result in major capital expenditures to repair. Evaluate the parking garage and develop a plan to address the known issues and increase the annual allocation for maintenance. **Priority A**

Residential Parking Permit Program:

- Enforcement of the Hanover Street zone is not practical as it is difficult to identify resident's vehicles.
 - A formal RPPP requires the issuance of permits to registered vehicles.
 - Typical procedures or program development are outlined in the study.
- The Chair stated that residential parking is being looked into now and **Priority B**. The City Manager stated this is a policy decision for the City Council. The second part would be the unintended consequences as sometimes you can create the zones and pushes parking to other places.

Valet Parking Zones:

- Cities will grant the exclusive use of an existing metered parking space or truck loading zone as a designated drop-off/pick-up point during non-peak periods. The chair this needs to be looked into. **Priority B**

The Manager asked staff if there was anything else they felt needed to be addressed?

Steve Parkinson referred to residential parking as one of the hottest issues, increasing rates in the downtown area and increase of enforcement has pushed long term day time parking into the neighborhoods abutting the central business district. Whatever program is implemented needs to be looked at City wide.

The City Manager stated there should be a monetary payment they need to make, a permit fee for the year. Enforcement is an important component. Mr. Cullen suggested a test zone evaluation to see what works and doesn't work using existing personnel.

The Mayor asked where it bubbles out? Steve Parkinson responded the McDonough St. area, parts of Islington/Summer Streets/ State St. by Farrell Funeral Home, Austin St./Richards Ave., Parrott Ave., Livermore St., Hancock St., Washington St., Gate St., across the railroad tracts towards the old Portsmouth Herald bldg. on Vaughan St. but not much beyond this.

David Holden referred to the need to coordinate the drafting of a zoning Ordinance. The standards applied now are really the ones that apply outside the City, not geared to the downtown. The bus pullovers on Hanover St. nice if the buses used it. Tim Cherry stated they are getting better now.

Andrew Purgiel stated they should hit budget this year on projected revenues.

Ruth Bowen stated the technology and equipment being garage software. The City Manager asked Steve to set up an internal staff committee with Seacoast to work on this.

Jon Frederick referred to the special operations procedures being worked on to be implemented and will report back at the next Parking Committee meeting.

Deputy Police Chief DiSesa stated the officers are aware of the parking issues and will keep doing enforcement.

The Mayor had questions on loading zones, in particular where there are multiple delivery heavy businesses needing a quick but close access for loading and unloading products. The City Manager stated this is an on-going issue and is continually being worked on.

The consultant referred to new meters that are available and provide 10 minutes free parking upfront by pushing a button which gives you 10 free minutes.

The City Manager thanked Mr. Cullen.

For the next Parking Meeting Jon Frederick will re-issue a memorandum showing the priorities as listed for distribution.

IV. ADJOURNMENT: Adjourned at approx. 10:40 am.

Respectfully submitted

Elaine E. Boucas, Recording Secretary