

SPECIAL PARKING COMMITTEE MEETING
8:00 a.m. – July 16, 2010
City Hall – Conference Room A

I. CALL TO ORDER

The City Manager called the meeting to order at approximately 8:00 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Councilor Kenneth Smith, Chair
John Bohenko, City Manager
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director
Andrew Purgiel, City Controller
Michael Schwartz, Captain
Jon Frederick, Parking Manager

Also present were Councilor Chris Dwyer, Co-Chair JBC; Robert Sullivan, City Attorney; Mary Ann List, Library Director; Dan Hartrey; Dexter Legg, School Board Member and Co-Chair JBC; Doug Roberts, Project Manager; Lisa DeStefano, DeStefano Architects and Robin Bousser VHB.

III. Parking Related Matters Regarding Middle School Project – Councilor Dwyer stated that this meeting was requested after the last Joint Building Committee meeting. A couple of concerns were raised regarding the reality of the parking plan. The design team wants to address those issues prior to filing their plans for the TAC meeting. They are also concerned about the possibility of teachers and library staff potentially using all of Parrott Avenue for parking. Even with school not in session, Parrott Ave is fully parked. They would like the opportunity to revisit the idea of doing some dedicated permitted spaces at the lot at Parrott and Junkins for teaching staff and felt it important to have a meeting with the Parking Committee before final plans for the site are filed and going to TAC.

Doug Roberts added that the plan the design team has been developing was based on the previous meeting back in January 2009. They are showing 105 spaces on site with strategies of sharing parking between the Middle School and Library. Also, the plan proposed to have 45 spaces on Parrott Ave permitted for staff use during school hours during the school year. The Middle School educational requirement is 100 spaces and projected the Library would have a need for approximately 70 spaces with their front parking lot providing 18 spaces.

The City Manager asked what the issue was with the plan.

Councilor Dwyer responded the Committee's plan was to try and open up some spaces on Parrott Ave that would be public and visitor parking and that they would not be designated so there wouldn't be a complete line of parking on Parrott that would be taken over by the school. The Committee discussed

asking the architects to think about 12-15 spaces that might be permitted in the Parrott Ave lot for teachers.

The City Manager asked the City Attorney that if the spaces were put on the street would a sign be needed for each space for enforcement.

Attorney Sullivan has a very, very strong preference for putting reserved parking spaces on the Parrott Ave. lot rather than on the street. The basis of the recommendation is that the City owns the Parrott Ave Lot, but we don't own the street. We have the right to regulate the streets under the so-called police powers granted by the state legislature. There is no specific grant of authority from the Legislature saying we can reserve what are really public spaces on streets for specified City employees. There is no doubt we have the authority on land that we own. Attorney Sullivan is not concluding that it's impossible to do the street, but is concluding that it is preferable for these reasons if we can provide parking in the lot.

Robin Bousser referred to the VHB parking study of a full inventory of all the parking along Parrott Ave, school lots, library lots as well as the parking area off Rockland St., the tennis court. We found that the library has 96% utilization, 45 spaces on the street, giving 7-9% spaces on the street, giving us 7-9% vacant spaces during the day. Particularly we'd like to see a 90% occupancy giving the ease of turnover. We are finding the open spaces in the Rockland St. parking lot. The recommendation at this point is to make sure there is set parking on-site for people, visitors and employees that have to come throughout the day. The library, school and courthouse generate traffic and parking demands on the street. We need to get people who typically park in Parrott Ave or adjacent lot over to the Rockland St. lot. With signage and striping the lot, you can get approximately 24 vehicles in there.

There are approximately 6 residential cars parked in the Rockland St. lot throughout the day.

Councilor Dwyer stated it is not only school and library; there is tremendous recreation demand in the area as well.

Mr. Roberts stated it was his understanding the discussion was that the school demand is during school hours, the recreational use offsets that, occurring after school hours.

MaryAnn List stated that what we need to account for is the overlap that happens there.

Mr. Roberts commented typically when approaching parking you go to the norm, overlap is one of the extremes, and there are always going to be situations where you can't accommodate the total parking demand.

Councilor Dwyer stated being Portsmouth we have a normalcy that is extreme every day, especially whenever there's something at the Levenson Room - almost every day during the day as well as the evening. It isn't Library patronage only, its meeting space. The library has three active meeting rooms from a 9am to 9pm. It's not occasional activity - it's frequent.

Mary Ann List is hearing when directing people to Rockland St., it is the staff that needs to use Rockland Street. When we have people who park once and

leave once, we need to park those people nearby. Staff needs designated parking and the customers need the parking on the street or near the building. Councilor Dwyer stated people are parking there and walking to the Naval Shipyard, people leave cars there (the reason for putting 72 hour signs), condo owners leave their cars there. These are challenges but we have a responsibility for employees of the City who are working at the Library, School and the visitors to those institutions. We have offered other alternatives to the other folks, we pay for the Masonic lot and pay for other options and feel we have a responsibility to the people we are representing first, understanding there will be some challenges for some people who have to walk another minute, but we have provided that for free.

The Chair stated although there are some who go to the Shipyard there are a lot of people that use it who work downtown.

Jon Frederick reported the hours of the lot Monday through Saturday 6:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. daily. There are approximately 60 spaces and utilization at peak is 45 % leaving 30 spaces available at peak.

The City Manager suggested a walking study and time it. Jon Fredrick estimated only a 5 minute walk which would be more than the Parrott Ave lot.

Councilor Dwyer stated she doesn't understand the logic of why we would privilege the bank teller over the staff we are paying.

The City Manager responded the logic being if it is 5 minutes it would relieve the issue of parking in that particular area. A policy decision probably should be made by the School Board rather than by the JBC, as they deal with employees.

The Chair stated start looking at a parking garage, which the City Manager has talked about ever since the approval of the Middle School. A parking garage is necessary on Parrott Ave.

The City Manager stated one choice from the JBC is to continue with the proposal as presented here originally to have parking on the street or shift some parking into the Parrott Ave lot.

Metering Parrott Ave was discussed for a turn over, so people don't park there for 72 hours and we don't reduce usage.

Captain Michael Swartz asked what the plan was for bus traffic and bus loading and unloading.

Doug Roberts responded all bus loading and unloading is moved onto the school site itself as a bus loop was created around the building with the addition. There is space for 12 buses to stack on site and off the public way.

Steve Parkinson stated the 23 spaces on the school side of Parrott Ave are currently restricted spaces for bus loading and unloading, morning and evening. Typically during the day parents may park there. Those spaces currently are out of the inventory of regular parking and may be wise at looking to split the two things. Those are spaces we don't have now for public parking during school hours and we really looking at 22 spaces on the opposite side of the street that come into play.

The Chair stated the plan on the table now is to move the spaces in the Parrott Ave lot, and will have to think of appropriate enforcement to make sure

employees do park down there and the spaces on the street remain open for short-term parking.

The Chair suggested instead of taking all the spaces in the Parrott Ave lot to try to do some in the Parrott Ave lot and some in the Rockland St. lot.

The Chair suggested one way or the other do signage in the Parrott Ave lot to let people know that overflow parking should go to the Masonic Temple lot.

Mary Ann List has concern regarding enforcement. People still park when the sign "Library parking only" is posted. Also, she concurs that we should take people who park once a day and leave once a day and put them into lots giving all library customers a reasonable place to park. She also realizes there may be difficulty with enforcement there and at the same time not have everyone in town mad at us for trying to do something good.

The City Manager feels it important to assign each teacher a permit number, so there would be 45 signs in the lot.

Jon Frederick stated the easiest place for these spaces would be one of the center aisles. There would be less poles and less signs involved.

The City Manager stated in order to bring some kind of closure, as a committee we need to focus our discussion on a combination of parking on Parrott Ave and in the lot or all permit parking in the Parrott Ave lot with the 45 signed spaces.

The Chair stated by the information given by the City Attorney will have to go to the Parrott Ave lot.

Steve Parkinson commented that it is best to construct the garage now than later, when you have no other alternative to put parking during construction. You would eliminate 186 spaces during construction and add 45 school cars to the demand.

Attorney Sullivan reported no Ordinance change is necessary for the 45 space permit parking within the Parrott Ave Lot. A vote by the City Council authorizing permitting parking in Parrott Ave. would suffice. An Ordinance change is required on the street but not the lot.

The Chair will report to the City Council on Monday that 45 parking spaces would be permitted for staff in Parrott Ave. lot.

Robin Bousser will look at the data and give a more detailed feedback.

At the next Parking Committee meeting will be discussion on possibility of decks, levels or however we'll be able to expand that lot.

Jon Frederick stated that patrons would rather use Parrott Ave lot than the Mason's Lot due to a sight issue. The distance from Parrott Ave lot to Market Sq. is the same distance from the Masons lot to Congress & Middle. However, you can't see the downtown from the Mason's while you can from Parrott Ave Lot. It makes Parrott Ave Lot seem closer.

The Chair suggested a sign in the Parrott Ave lot letting people know the overflow to the Masonic lot available, a five minute walk.

IV. ADJOURNMENT