

## **CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION – Proposed Second Parking Garage at Worth Lot**

Conference Room A

January 28, 2002 – 6:30 p.m.

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Officials Present: Mayor Sirrell, Assistant Mayor Hanson, Councilors Grasso, Lown, Hynes, Pantelakos, Whitehouse, Marconi and St. Laurent

Officials Present: John P. Bohenko, City Manager; John Burke, Parking & Transportation Engineer; Nancy Carmer, Community Development Department; Robert Sullivan, City Attorney; and Kelli L. Barnaby, City Clerk

Others Present: Economic Development Commission members Mark Simpson, Tom Ferrini, Scott Pafford, Dana Levenson, and Everett Eaton

Mayor Sirrell called the work session to order at 6:30 p.m.

City Manager Bohenko said the purpose of this work session is to discuss a proposed second parking garage at the Worth Lot. He advised the Council that John Burke would be providing a history of parking in the City and the future needs. He said that Tom Ferrini of the Economic Development Commission would provide a broad overview of the northern tier and the importance of parking for an expansion of the northern tier.

City Manager Bohenko said in 1998 a parking study was completed and consequently 13 sites were identified as potential locations for a future-parking garage. One of the 2 top sites selected was the Worth Lot. The City Council allocated \$25,000 in the CIP and for the last 2 years, the City has been working on the concept of a second parking facility.

Parking & Transportation Engineer Burke reviewed the parking improvement plan, program performances, and the need for structured parking, site selection summary, conceptual layout, and feasibility study elements. He said that parking services have been consolidated under the Public Works Department to provide better services to the public rather than having it split between three departments. He briefly discussed the computer software now being used to track utilization of the High Hanover Parking Facility. The parking garage filled to capacity 21 times in 2001. He said that enforcement has increased to ensure that meters are overturning and all day parking is being eliminated. He discussed the benefits of the Worth Lot for an additional parking facility.

City Manager Bohenko said he would like to construct this second parking facility at no cost to the taxpayers but with funds raised from parking revenues.

Economic Development Commission member Ferrini discussed the redevelopment of the northern tier. He said as the northern tier develops an additional parking facility would be necessary and the Worth Lot would be as valuable as the High Hanover Parking Facility. He said that a parking facility is a wonderful development tool and every business that has expressed interest in coming to Portsmouth inquires on the availability of parking in the City.

City Manager Bohenko said that it is important for the City Council to take a pro-active stance on parking as it did back in 1997/1998. He said the funds for a feasibility study have been set aside in the 2000 CIP through the Urban Development Grant.

Economic Development Commission member Pafford said it is important for the City to stay ahead of the curve and use this space as a parking facility.

Economic Development Commission member Eaton said that the lack of parking is the major reason existing businesses are not expanding and new businesses are not locating here.

Steve Alie, local business owner said that parking availability has not met the needs of the retailers and its patrons for the downtown.

Councilor Whitehouse expressed concerns regarding the air rights to the Worth Lot once the property reverts to the City.

City Manager Bohenko said he is confident that something could be negotiated with the Worth Lot Corporation regarding the air rights. He said that he would like to work with the Economic Development Commission on hiring a consultant to do a feasibility study on the Worth Lot. He said that we need to look at the parking needs for the northern tier and we will be able to continue to use the study if the City Council decides not to use the Worth Lot as a parking facility. He said that the funds have been appropriated but he did not want to expend those funds without consensus from the City Council.

Councilor Lown asked if the \$25,000 is not used for this study what could it be used for.

City Manager Bohenko said for other economic development needs.

Councilor Marconi said that in the 1970's there was a lawsuit on the air rights of the Worth Lot and requested that the case be reviewed before moving forward.

Councilor Grasso spoke in favor of building a second parking facility at the Worth Lot, but she does not want to see this fast tracked. She said that she would support a feasibility study to find out what we need.

Councilor Hynes spoke against the need for a second parking facility. He said a second facility in that location would create gridlock and congestion in the area. He said a need for a second facility has not been shown.

Assistant Mayor Hanson said that in order to develop the northern tier parking needs to be made available. He spoke in favor of the study because it would provide the City Council with a business plan to review.

Councilor Whitehouse reminded the Council that spaces would be opening up at the High Hanover Parking Facility because of Bottomline Technology moving out of the downtown.

Councilors Pantelakos and St. Laurent spoke in support of the need for a feasibility study of this site.

Mayor Sirrell said that the funds have been appropriated and a feasibility study is needed, however she expressed concerns regarding the air rights.

Mayor Sirrell requested consensus from the City Council for the funds to be expended for the feasibility study of the Worth Lot. Mayor Sirrell, Assistant Mayor Hanson, Councilors Grasso, Lown, Pantelakos, Marconi and St. Laurent voiced their support. Councilors Hynes and Whitehouse voiced their opposition.

At 7:40 p.m., Mayor Sirrell closed the work session.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kelli L. Barnaby, City Clerk