

PARKING COMMITTEE MEETING
9:00 AM –Thursday, October 13, 2005
City Hall – Conference Room A

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman John Hynes called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Councilor John Hynes, Chairman
John P. Bohenko, City Manager
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director
Deputy Police Chief Dave Young
Absent: Andrew Purgiel

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Motion made by Steve Parkinson to accept the June 14, 2005 minutes of the Parking Committee. Seconded by Deputy Police Chief Dave Young. Motion passed.

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

- (A) **Review of Parking Study Technical Reports #1 and #2** - Steve Parkinson outlined Reports 1 and 2 regarding the evaluation of the entire department. Report #1 reported parking evaluation. Our on-street rates compared to other municipalities for on-street parking of \$.50 to \$1.25, we are at \$.75. The average across the country for similar sized communities is \$.70. Our off-street parking such as garages and lots when compared to regional cities, our hourly off-street rate was lower. Typically, most communities are charging \$1.00 - \$1.50/hour with a high of \$2.00/hour. They did not compare to Boston, as there is no set rate, it varies across the board. The rates both on and off-street are appropriate for facilities we operate. Parking fines range from \$5.00-\$29.00 depending upon what community you are in. There were some even higher. Our basic fine is \$15.00 which is in the middle of the \$29.00 range. Our rates and fines are appropriate. Our system seems to be providing the needs of the business people, the downtown residents and visitors who rely on the parking assets that we have.

The impact of our rates were looked at. Our rates were raised from \$.50/hr to \$.75/hr in July 2004. The concern was that we would be driving people from parking spaces in the garage. The study shows this does not seem to have happened, there was no adverse impact. What it did do in the parking garage itself when we had more transients then contracts, our

contracts has increased, as there is an advantage. We did not change the monthly, daily or nightly cost of passes which now gives a discount over on-street parking which has moved the transients into the garage for a long term type of contract. This is the only impact that was found from raising the rates. They feel that we now have a strong demand for parking and there are indications the demand will outstrip the supply. They do not feel that we need to decrease our parking rates at any point in time but need to keep in mind the possible need to increase the rates to control how parking supply meet the needs of various entities within a couple of years. Need to look at this on a regular basis and not wait 5 years, should be evaluated every few years to see what is going on out there and whether or not we need to raise rates especially with on-street parking. They feel the present rate structure is business friendly. They did point out that contract fixed rate parking in garage of \$100/month and nightly fee of \$50.00/month have not been changed since 1997.

City Manager stated this was a conscious decision by the Council and Economic Development Commission as they both maintain to keep our parking rates down. There is no recommendation at this time from City Manager's office to increase any parking rates, but we do need to look at this every couple of years and would like to continue to be competitive in our parking rates.

One goal we do not meet or adequately address is the current rate structure as it relates to downtown residential needs and suggest we look at this area to see if we can come up with a system more appropriate and useful for those residents of the downtown area. Overall, our existing rates are appropriate for Portsmouth. They suggested we review bi-annually parking rates and policies as things change. Recommended expanding use of flat rate in the garage. Currently we use the flat rate for special events such as Market Sq. Day, etc. Suggesting that any type of a gathering that has upwards of 240 participants that we look at the flat rate for that function.

City Manager stated we have been doing this on a case by case basis.

They are also suggesting establishment of a maximum daily rate.

Steve suggested something to consider next time we change our rates potentially we may want to have a price differential between the parking garage and off street.

City Manager stated this was debated at our last discussion of rates and City Council decided to keep rates the same.

Steve Parkinson stated that COAST bus routes have increased in ridership and routes have been expanded including the hospital on Borthwick Ave.

The report also recommended establishment of a relationship between the hourly rate and the rate charged for contract parking. The contract rate has not changed, we did however change the hourly rate which creates a discount.

City Manager stated we want to be able to provide a rate that is very competitive, a very good rate for monthly parkers. We have 550 leased parking spaces at the High-Hanover Parking Garage, the majority are 12-hour daytime passes, which leaves the weekend evenings open for utilization by a different population. We should keep an eye on this.

Steve Parkinson referred to Report #2 on Service delivery evaluation which concentrated more on Parking Garage and parking meters themselves and how service is delivered. One of the primary items for the parking garage which they referred to is an additional exit. The more exits you have, the quicker processing a queue of cars. We are in the process of this, we are adding a booth at Fleet Street where we already have an exit. The booth has been ordered to be installed there so that in times of higher demand we can take the lower floor and part of the second floor and have them exit Fleet St. For the most part our operations are fine, they do note that as each year goes by the equipment becomes outdated. Ours is very well maintained. They are suggesting various options for types of payments you see in larger cities whereby you go to a machine, put your ticket in and tells you how much you owe. The problem for us is that our facility has numerous access points for people coming back into the garage, Fleet, Ladd and High and Hanover Streets rather than everyone going out one door at one location which is great for our situation. Credit card operations was discussed, but there is a fee and costs associated with credit cards. They went into the electronic meters and the fact they are eight years old, practical life is ten years and suggested the need for putting money aside to potentially replace those in ten – twelve years. Steve stated he tends to lean more on the twelve year side as our equipment is well maintained on a regular basis. Most of the issues we have are people stuffing the coin slot with paper, etc.

Enforcement hours was referred to, our 9am to 7pm Monday through Saturday are appropriate. They found in their study that our turnover rate is 4.78, benchmark is 3.5. We exceed, our enforcement is out there doing its job keeping the turnover rate of the metered spaces.

Multi-space meters were looked at, not sure this is appropriate for our on-street parking. Feel that they are more of a use on surface lots, such as Parrott Avenue. We find people have trouble finding regular meters, people will not see these multi meters.

Smart cards a potential but there is an added cost there. City Manager stated that at some point we may have to go to smart cards as technology is changing and probably have two to three years before we want to make this change because of the useful life of our existing meters. There are multiple kinds of cards out there now from a cell phone type and wireless.

Something to look at probably when we replace the meters. Meters were purchased in 1997-98 therefore looking at 2008 to change out our meters at the earliest and may come back to the committee next year for a pilot program. Would like to see a pilot program next year with some smart cards.

Steve Parkinson stated that Ez-Pass is working now, there are at least two airports utilizing ez-pass in their garages now.

City Manager stated when we look at ez-pass or card, it has to be something universal.

The report referred to parking organization and recommended consolidating personnel and offices into one location.

At next month's meeting the City Manager would like to discuss looking at staffing in parking area, how we can streamline some of that. We now have a new traffic engineer and there are a lot of projects happening that deal with just engineering side of the project rather than administrative side of parking and would like to come back next month and discuss this.

The report suggested during the peak times of operation of garage particularly night time, (Friday/Saturday nights) bag the spaces across from the main entrance on Hanover Street, similar to what we do at special events, to allow that traffic to continue on down Hanover Street if not going into the garage. We do this during special events but they are suggesting Friday and Saturday nights between 7pm until closing.

City Manager asked how many meters. Steve answered four spaces directly across from the garage. The City Manager suggested doing this.

The report recommends putting money aside for new equipment and meters; investigate various types of paying systems; modifying Fleet St. entrance to accept exiting traffic, cash paying customers; interconnect from the second floor to allow traffic that maybe backed up onto the third and fourth floors to by-pass the line and go down to the lower gate, controlled by our security person, giving us two modes of exiting. Exploring new equipment with technology changes. Investigate various types of paying systems.

Report #3 will be received within the next week or so dealing with neighborhood parking, parking permits and resident parking,

City Manager suggested that when the third report comes in, after it is reviewed by the Committee, set up a work session with City Council in

January or February. There are a lot of recommendations in these reports and need to keep City Council advised of what they are.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

- (A) **Municipal Parking Lots – Length of Vehicles** – Steve Parkinson stated there are issues with larger types of vehicles, motor homes large trucks being parked in more than one space. Feels it would be appropriate to limit the length of vehicles allowed in our surface lots as this takes away from the use of the lot for its intended purpose.

City Manager asked what the standard length would be? Deputy Police Chief Dave Young suggested using the length of the average parking space. Steve Parkinson will check the Ordinance and report back at the next meeting.

City Manager suggested trying this for a year.

MOTION made by John Bohenko to refer to Public Works for report back at the next meeting. Seconded by Steve Parkinson. Motion passed.

- (B) **Pleasant Street Parking - Horse and Carriage spaces** – Receiving inquiries that the sign is still there, but the horse and carriage have not been there for some time and is taking two spaces out of circulation from noon until evening. Should we continue with this or remove it until someone comes back with a horse and carriage at a future date, and reestablish it at that time.

MOTION made by John Bohenko, City Manager to temporarily eliminate that designation until such time as someone applies to reactivate that space. Seconded by Deputy Police Chief Young. Motion passed.

VII. ADJOURNMENT: Adjourned at approximately 9:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted

Elaine E. Boucas, Secretary