

**CITY OF NORWICH
NORWICH PUBLIC PARKING COMMISSION**

The following are the minutes of the regular meeting of the Public Parking Commission held at 5: 30 p.m., July 20, 2010 in the Buckingham Memorial Bldg.

PRESENT: Ms. Olive Buddington,
Ms. Laurie Glenney- Popovich,
Mr. Alan Bergren, Mr. Pete Desaulniers,
Mr. Jeffrey Lord, Mr. William Nash,
and Mr. Sean Ryan.

ABSENT: None

ALSO ATTENDING: Ms. Lottie Scott, Attorney Richard Pascal, Mr. Robert Farwell
Mr. Richard Kramer. Representatives of the Norwich Bulletin,
The Day and WICH.

Chairwoman Buddington called the meeting to order at 5:30pm, noting a quorum was present.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Attorney Richard Pascal addressed the Commission regarding the possibility of extending the Validation program to law offices in the vicinity of the Courthouse. He stated that the law offices are at a disadvantage due to the 30 minute time limit in the downtown area. He noted that most clients are in the attorney's office for longer than 30 minutes, even for simple matters. The Commission members thanked him for coming to the meeting and voicing his request. The members also reminded him that there are 2 free, untimed parking areas in the immediate vicinity of the Courthouse and there is 2 hour parking available on Water Street, Market Street and Chelsea Harbor Drive.

Ms. Lottie Scott addressed the Commission on the lack of Handicap parking spaces in the vicinity of 307 Main Street. She stated that it was her opinion that the Handicap spaces in the Railroad Avenue Lot should be moved closer to Main Street. The Commission members thanked her for her appearance and assured her that her comments would be taken into consideration.

Mr. Robert Farwell addressed the Commission as Director of the Otis Library. He appeared at the request of library patrons, asking to join the validation program. Mr. Farwell made a point of noting that anytime a request has been made to the Commission for “exceptions”, there has been cooperation from the office. He also stated that the relationship between the Commission and the Library is very cordial and the Commission office has always been quick to respond to his requests. The major concern is the “book sale” fundraiser to be held in October. Mr. Farwell was assured that provisions will be made for the sale to run smoothly. Mr. Ryan suggested that the spaces in front of the library be designated as temporary “no parking” to allow for a “pickup” area for book dealers. As the sale date nears, final plans will be put in place. Mr. Farwell thanked the Commission for the opportunity to address them and stated that he will assure the patrons that plans are in place for a successful fundraiser!

Ms. Buddington thanked all speakers for coming and voicing their concerns. She assured them that each subject would be discussed by the members.

MINUTES:

On a motion by Mr. Nash, second by Mr. Ryan, the Commission voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the May 18, 2010 regular meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORTS & BILLS TO BE PAID:

A motion was made by Mr. Lord, seconded by Mr. Nash to accept the financial reports and accounts payable reports for May & June 2010.

The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Copies of letters from Attorney Pascal and Attorney Sayet were accepted as presented.

NEW BUSINESS:

Discussion of the Validation program:

Ms. Buddington started the discussion by stating that the current Validation program exists as a courtesy to the downtown merchants. It was instituted at the request of downtown merchants as a way to offer customers convenient, worry free parking while shopping in local stores. The requirements are simple, it is limited to retail or tangible goods.

Ms. Rizzuto provided Commission members research relating to our program and the forms we require/distribute with our “packet” as well as other validation programs throughout the nation. Most cities have a validation program, but it is not free for the participant. The merchants pay a fee to participate and any tickets issued are paid from the Validation pool.

Mr. Nash explained that the parking plan allows for an initial change to 30 minutes on street, in the core downtown area, followed by placement of paid parking kiosks for on street parking spaces. The kiosks would be paid in 30 minute increments with 2 hour maximums, restoring the 2 hour allotted time to most onstreet spaces. The free municipal spaces, in specified lots/garages would remain available.

Mr. Lord stated that the City is dying and we need to do everything we can to be business friendly. He stated that you can't eat lunch, get a haircut or go to a lawyer in 30 minutes. He said he also felt the 30 minute limit was “ill conceived”, and he has had several complaints about it.

Mr. Nash stated that most of the errands that Mr. Lord mentioned would be covered by the existing validation program. Any merchant downtown who does not belong is doing a disservice to their customers.

Mr. Ryan said that he supports the idea of allowing attorneys to participate in the Validation program with certain restrictions, and that we can tweak the program at any time.

Ms. Buddington, Mr. Nash and Ms. Glenney-Popovich were not in favor of validating for a client parked on street for several hours.

Ms. Buddington appointed a subcommittee to explore the options of expanding the validation program. The subcommittee members are : Mr. Desaulniers, Mr. Nash and Mr. Ryan. They will report on their findings at the September meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:Discussion of parking changes:

Mr. Rick Kramer, Director of Rose City Renaissance, started the discussion by stating that parking is not a significant problem downtown. The number of spaces directly impacted by the change to 30 minutes is small in comparison to the total parking available downtown. He stated that the comments he has heard from people indicate that they want to park directly in front of the business that they are visiting, which is impossible.

The number of available spaces on street is not going to increase/decrease with a time limit change. He added that downtown areas are held to different parking standards than malls. When shopping at a mall, no one thinks twice about walking a great distance to get to their destination.

Ms. Glenney-Popovich stated that the parking plan was instituted after several months of discussion and research, during which the members all agreed that this was going to be put in place to help the downtown merchants. The initial 30 minute stage is a pre-empt for paid parking, which would allow for up to 2 hours of onstreet parking. Ms. Glenney-Popovich also stated that it is never easy to accept change, especially when its not convenient, but this is a good thing for the City and business owners.

Mr. Nash stated that people weren't happy when it was 2 hour parking. The difference is that we have a plan...and this 30 minute limit is part of the plan. The initial goal was to free up onstreet spaces for customers or visitors and the goal has been accomplished. There are onstreet spaces available during the busiest hours of the day.

The 30 minute time limit will be restored to a 2 hour maximum when the kiosks are in place. People will be able to choose the length of time they need and pay for it accordingly. Mr. Nash intends to approach the City Council with the request for the kiosk implementation within the next few months.

ANYTHING ELSE BROUGHT BEFORE THE COMMISSION:

Ms. Rizzuto brought to the Commission information relating to Southeastern Employment Services, Inc. This is a joint effort between the State of Ct Labor Department, DSS and several other agencies. They match prospective employees with employers at no cost to the employer. The Commission members gave the approval to start the process to see if we can use their services.

Mr. Ryan brought up Ms. Scott's comment related to the Handicap spaces at Railroad Avenue. The Commission stated that the spaces were moved from the rear of the Buckingham Building to the lower end of Railroad Ave due to safety issues. The lighting is better and the grade of the parking area is level, affording the disabled person ease of ingress/egress of the vehicle. Ms. Rizzuto was directed to respond to Ms. Scott thanking her for her concern, but at this time the spaces would not be moved. It was also suggested to remind her that on street parking is available in the area.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion made to adjourn by Mr. Ryan, second by Mr. Nash. Voted on and passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Judith A. Rizzuto, Administrator
Norwich Public Parking Commission