

**CITY OF NORWICH
NORWICH PUBLIC PARKING COMMISSION**

The following are the minutes of the regular meeting of the Public Parking Commission held at 5:15 p.m., July 21,2009 in the Buckingham Memorial Bldg.

PRESENT: Ms. Olive Buddington, Co-Chair, Mr. Alan Bergren,
Mr. Bettencourt, Mr. Jeffrey Lord,
Mr. Sean Ryan and Mr. Robert Zarnetske.

ABSENT: Mr. William Nash

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Ald. Jonathon Jacaruso, State of Conn. DCF Program Director
Ms. Sheila Carbray
Mr. Gerard Arpin
Mr. Peter Szydlo
Mr. Charles Snurkowski
Mr. Bobbie Adams
Mr. Harry Lawson
Ms. Nancy DePietro, Office Administrator, Catholic Charities
Ms. Barbara Richardson Crouch
Mr. Richard Caron, Director, Ct. Pardon Team
Mr. Robert Farwell, Director, Otis Library
Mr. Richard Kramer, Director, Rose City Renaissance
Ms. Jackie Caron, Founder/CEO, Ct. Pardon Team

At 5:17 p.m. Ms. Buddington called the meeting to order, noting a quorum was present.

Ms. Buddington requested that members of the Parking Commission introduce themselves to those in attendance before proceeding. Ms. Buddington explained that she would call the speakers according to the list. After all had spoken, the Commission would discuss their comments.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Alderman Jonathan Jacaruso was the first to speak. As a program director at DCF, he is very aware of parking issues in the downtown area. He noted that he has worked with the Commission office in the past, before becoming an Alderman, and was pleased with the level of cooperation between the two agencies. Mr. Jacaruso also stated that he has been watching the papers and has been concerned with the “facts and process” that has been used to address parking issues. Mr. Jacaruso stated that he was glad that the issues were being discussed at the NPPC meeting.

He noted that both Mr. Bettencourt and Mr. Zarnetske had responded to an editorial published in the Bulletin on June 26,2009 with explanations and ideas to help solve the parking issues downtown. One of the statements in Mr. Zarnetske’s editorial was published as “municipal and state employees already enjoy free parking”, Mr.Jacaruso wanted to state that Mr. Zarnetske’s statement was misleading. While the individual employee does not have an out of pocket parking expense, the State of Connecticut does pay for its parking spaces as does the City of Norwich.

The next comment Mr. Jacaruso made was that having public input is very important...problems can’t be solved without specific concerns being brought forward. He is concerned about the process. He has read that there will be a forum hosted by Bob Zarentske to address parking concerns on July 28,2009. Mr. Zarnetske, a member of the Parking Commission, has organized a separate forum, has not invited or notified Parking Commission members of the forum. The public should be heard in the context of regular parking commission meetings..the decision makers are members of the Commission. Mr. Jacaruso stated that by Mr. Zarnetske organizing and promoting the forum, he was disrespecting and undermining the role of the Commission members.

Ms. Sheila Carbray, Ledyard, CT , stated that she is a volunteer at St. Vincent DePaul Place one day a week. She received a parking ticket for parking in a reserved space. She feels that it should be made easier for people to park and then maybe the City would be “bustling” like it was in the 50’ and 60’s.

Mr. Gerard Arpin, Sandy Lane, Norwich CT, stated that he is on Railroad Avenue every day...received a delinquent notice, but no ticket...and had to pay \$30.00. Had various pictures of the City. The “bumpouts” by the library and La Stella, pictures of signs, pictures of the Backus van etc. Didn’t think it was fair that pictures of his vehicle were taken from the office window.

Mr. Peter Szydlo, Taftville, CT, stated that he felt there is no parking in Norwich during the day. Questioned who authorizes the placement of “restricted spaces” on street. He received a ticket for parking in a Handicap space in front of the Otis Library.

Mr. Charles Snurkowski, Norwich, CT remarked on the vehicles being parked on the Water Street side of the Courthouse, in the No Parking Zone. Stated that he felt they should be subject to parking tickets. Brown Park spaces should be repainted to reflect that they are public parking.

Mr. Bobbie Adams, Norwich, CT commented that there are too many reserved spaces in the Cliff Street Lot. Ms. Rizzuto was asked to explain the Cliff Street lot parking. The public spaces are outlined in white approx. 40 spaces, subject to a 2 hour maximum/day. 20 spaces reserved, outlined in yellow. He was also concerned about the lack of parking in Brown Park. Ms. Rizzuto stated that as of 01/09, there are only 2 tenants in the Waterfront Lot. The other spaces have been signed as 2 hour max/day, public spaces. It was requested that the word “reserved” on the pavement be painted over to reduce confusion.

Mr. Harry Lawson, Norwich, CT requested vendor/loading signs in front of his business. Remarked that signage is lacking on his side of Main Street, Harp & Dragon gets special treatment, tickets issued to his customers and vendors and his personal vehicle while unloading groceries for his store.

Ms. Nancy DePietro, Office Administrator, Catholic Charities Norwich, CT, opened her statement by saying that she has nothing negative to say. Hopes that the Commission and everyone in attendance stop and look at things differently. Downtown is not what it used to be. This is not the 1960’s, everyone has multiple vehicles and it is difficult to find parking. As far as shopping goes, where would one shop down here? We continue to work in unison with Jill from SVDP, the Parking Commission and Bob from Otis Library to improve safety and alleviate the fear factor for persons coming to this side of the downtown. It is important that we all work together to create an environment that is inviting and safe. It seems that most of what I’ve heard tonight has been badgering....and that does not solve anything. There is no easy solution, just keep working...

Ms. Barbara Richardson Crouch, Norwich, CT requested expanding time limits for parking spaces. Stated that we should issue summons more consistently....

Mr. Richard Caron, Director, Norwich Pardon Team, Norwich, CT stated that he feels that the enforcement should be increased and that our jurisdiction should be expanded. From his observations, most of the parking spaces downtown are abused by habitual users. Business owners included. Mr. Caron suggested that the time limits should be reduced to provide for quicker turnover of on street spaces. Mr. Caron also remarked on the “badgering” and name calling of the Commission staff. They are just trying to do their job.

Mr. Robert Farwell, Director, Otis Library added that he is aware of the parking problems encountered in the immediate area of the library. It appears that some of the problem stems from a lack of civility and not obeying the existing rules. The reserved spaces for the library staff have been poached several times and when asked to move, the violator has argued. Library staff and patrons do not expect a confrontation when coming to the library. The Commission office has always been very responsive to requests for aid.

Mr. Richard Kramer, Director, Rose City Renaissance, Norwich, CT , RCR completed a parking study last year and determined that Norwich does have adequate parking for its current needs. It seems from the conversation that identifying the location of off street parking maybe a problem. There has been new signage put up and the parking commission has done a good job in trying to keep up with the signs and markings. RCR will help to direct persons to parking locations. In summation, he also called for civility and for people to follow the rules of parking and we would all be better off.

Ms. Jackie Caron, Founder/CEO Norwich Pardon Team, Norwich, CT commented that the persons who park on street and have off street permits are a problem. The key players from downtown businesses should be included in discussing parking options.

Ms. Buddington called an end to public comment.

The Commission will proceed with the rest of the meeting agenda.

MINUTES:

On a motion by Mr. Zarnetske, second by Mr. Ryan, the Commission voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the May 19, 2009 meeting as recorded.

FINANCIAL REPORTS & BILLS TO BE PAID:

A motion was made by Mr. Zarnetske, seconded by Mr. Lord to accept the financial report for May 2009.

A motion was made by Mr. Ryan, seconded by Mr. Zarnetske to accept the accounts payable report for May 2009.

Both motions were voted on and passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

Expansion mobility update...Mr. Bergren has contacted Chief Fusaro with a few questions and Ms. Rizzuto has been in contact with Bill Block. We are awaiting responses from both departments. Information will be distributed as soon as it is available.

NEW BUSINESS: NONE

ANYTHING ELSE BROUGHT BEFORE THE COMMISSION:

Mr. Zarnetske presented a protest that was dropped off at his office on Tuesday afternoon. The letter was from Mr. Peter Jurczik and was read by Mr. Zarnetske. Mr. Jurczik was issued a summons for a No Parking violation. It was explained that Handicap spaces, when occupied legally, are exempt from time restrictions and we have no authority to remove the vehicle. Mr. Zarnetske asked that the Administrator write a letter to Mr. Jurczik, explaining why the summons was issued and what a handicap permit allows.

Mr. Zarnetske asked the Chairwoman if it would be the appropriate time to address the comments made by Mr. Jacaruso. Ms. Buddington allowed him to speak.

Mr. Zarnetske stated that he would like to respond to comments from Alderman Jacaruso that were directed at him. Mr. Zarnetske said, in his opinion, that “ Mr. Jacaruso appeared with a political agenda... intended to launch an attack... really just aimed at raising doubts about whether or not I have the interest of this commission and the interests of the community in mind.” He first addressed the issue of the forum that he has scheduled and will hold on 07/28/09. “ This forum was not intended to be a competitive event, it was not intended to be a parking commission meeting. I was not asking the Parking Commission to have a special meeting. At the same time Gerry was out trying to rally attendees for this meeting, I was talking to folks about having a “downtown forum” as part of my mayoral campaign.” It was not intended to be a Commission event. I had been thinking about the issues that downtown businesses experience and wanted to be sure that a forum would be available where all these issues could be discussed. Plans for this forum were initiated over a month ago. Mr. Arpin came to me about 2 weeks ago and we were discussing the parking issues. We tried to coordinate our efforts to get the word out about both meetings. Mr. Zarnetske felt there is no conflict nor any intent to diminish the role of the Parking Commission.

Ms. Buddington made note that Mr. Zarnetske’s comments would be entered into the minutes of this meeting.

Mr. Zarnetske also stated that he would like to inform folks that what he wrote in his editorial was available on line. He feels that it is unfair for state and municipal employees to have no “out of pocket” parking expense while private sector businesses don’t have that option.

Mr. Bettencourt stated that “semantics” are being used in Mr. Zarnetske’s argument...everyone who leases a space, pays for them...Mr. Bettencourt does not feel that the taxpayer should bear the burden for downtown parking. It needs to be a “fee based” system. People who use the service/space should be responsible to pay for it. Mr. Bettencourt also made a point of stating that decisions made by this Commission are usually by unanimous vote. Any changes, improvements or solutions to parking issues will cost the taxpayer money.

Mr. Ryan addressed the attendees and thanked them for their comments. He asked that Mr. Kramer follow through on his offer to help in educating people where the “off street” facilities are located. He also called upon the newspapers in attendance to do their part in informing the public of where and how to park. The Validation program was mentioned. Mr. Ryan referred to a comment made by Mr. Lawson, that he was not included in the program. Mr. Ryan asked how the program works. It was explained that businesses that provide shopping experiences, are eligible to participate in the program. Employees of downtown businesses are not eligible for ticket validation. Customers may have overtime violations validated by participating merchants. New businesses are provided with a packet of information and registration materials. Mr. Ryan stressed that the key for success is that everyone needs to be legally parked.

Mr. Ryan continued by stating that he wanted to address a comment made earlier, directed at Mr. Lord. Mr. Ryan stated that Mr. Lord is a valuable member of this Commission, serves on a volunteer basis, provides input and perspective on many issues and does it for no personal gain. Mr. Ryan felt the comment was a “low blow” and was not warranted and wanted to be sure that everyone knows that Mr. Lord is a valuable member of this Commission and his commitment is greatly appreciated.

Mr. Ryan and Ms. Buddington agreed that it is important that everyone realize that the Commission is not anti-business. Our aim is to provide easy, accessible parking for patrons that come downtown.

Mr. Arpin’s summons was discussed next. The summons was issued for a No Parking Zone. Mr. Zarnetske asked when the original summons was mailed...the original summons was mailed the day of issue. Mr. Arpin stated that he did not receive the summons, but did receive the delinquent notice.

Mr. Ryan made a motion that the penalty fee be refunded, but the original violation be upheld. The motion was seconded by Ms. Buddington. The motion was voted on . Ms. Buddington, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Lord, Mr. Bettencourt, Mr. Bergren voted in favor of the motion. Mr. Zarentske was opposed. Motion passed 5-1.

Mr. Bettencourt made a motion to allow 2 hour parking at broken meters, rather than bagging them. The motion was seconded by Mr. Zarnetske. Voted on and passed unanimously.

Mr. Ryan requested that the spaces at the Waterfront be repainted to remove “reserved” from the pavement. Signage indicating the 2 hour/ max per day status has been in place since 01/2009. He also requested that the Handicap spaces be refreshed, to make them easy to identify.

Mr. Zarnetske again revisited the “free state and municipal” parking. He asked that the Commission consider the fairness to the private sector in parking. Ms. Buddington asked him to present his plan at the September 2009 meeting and it will be considered.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion made to adjourn by Mr. Lord, second by Mr. Bettencourt. Voted on and passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:12 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Judith A. Rizzuto, Administrator
Norwich Public Parking Commission