

**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., September 15,2009 in the Buckingham Memorial Bldg.

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

ABSENT: Mr. William Nash,

At 5:18 p.m. Ms. Buddington called the meeting to order, noting a quorum was present.

MINUTES:

On a motion by Mr. Ryan, second by Mr. Lord, the Commission voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the July 21, 2009 meeting as recorded.

FINANCIAL REPORTS & BILLS TO BE PAID:

A motion was made by Mr.Bettencourt, seconded by Mr. Ryan to discuss the financial reports and accounts payable reports from June 2009 through August 2009.

During discussion, it was noted by Mr. Bettencourt that the meter revenues were not going to be as projected due to the YMCA closure. The reduction in revenue is something we must keep in mind as the fiscal year progresses.

A motion was made to accept the financial and accounts payable reports for June 2009 through August 2009 by Mr. Zarnetske, the motion was seconded by Mr. Lord. The motion voted on and passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT: NONE**CORRESPONDENCE:**

The Commission members were provided a copy of an FOI request from the Norwich Bulletin.

Copies of all correspondence relating to the request were provided for their information.

NEW BUSINESS:

A presentation related to a proposal from Mr. Zarnetske regarding changes to how parking is managed in the downtown area was accepted by the Commission.

Mr. Zarnetske began his presentation by stating that the basis of his proposal stems from studies done worldwide and relate to our City as well. Parking spaces that are in highest demand should be charged at a higher rate, while spaces in outlying/underused areas should be offered at a reduced/"free" rate. This premise would be a complete change for the City. The proposal indicates that metered parking should be reinstated on downtown streets, with time limits/day and with the higher fees, closest to the center of the City. As one goes from the center, the meters would be cheaper/hour and longer periods of time. Shorter time periods for onstreet parking spaces would benefit the downtown merchants. "Price is a natural regulator" stated Mr. Zarnetske. People will most often look for the cheaper spaces and allow the front door spaces for business customers. At this point in time, parking downtown is chaotic because the price is right, its free...we actually encourage people to park on street rather than in the offstreet areas. Employees choose to play a "cat and mouse" game rather than use their permit parking or pay to park at a meter. Through discussion it was determined that the Commission does not have the authority to install meters "onstreet". That decision would fall to the City Council. The Commission can offer a recommendation to the Council, but has no actual authority in the decision.

Another portion of the presentation focused on the premise of offering downtown business owners and their employees a permit for free parking in designated offstreet areas. The Chestnut, YMCA, Cliff St lots and the Main St garage were mentioned. Ms. Rizzuto reminded the Commission that we are bound by a lease with the MEB for the Main St. garage so we have to be mindful of what we do. Discussion began with the idea of changing the time limits for onstreet spaces, throughout the downtown area. Suggestions were made that we change signage to indicate shorter time limits on street, as a first step towards the change. Maximum time limit on street should be 30 minutes. Mr. Zarnetske stated that several business owners have approached him with complaints about having to pay for parking.

Mr. Lord and Mr. Ryan stated that they chose to locate in a downtown area and parking is a cost of doing business, no matter where you are located. Whether the cost is included in a lease agreement or as an “out of pocket expense”, everyone pays for parking. It is totally unrealistic for anyone to expect free parking. Mr. Lord stated that parking is not the reason businesses are moving out of downtown...parking is being used as an excuse to hide the real issues of downtown. The discussion turned to the revenue aspect and how the “shortfall” would be dealt with...Mr. Bettencourt stated that the “free parking” would not work unless the onstreet spaces were metered.

The proposal is the direct opposite of current use. The lots and garages would be free and onstreet would be fee based. All revenue currently generated by the Commission would have to be provided from the City budget, another burden for taxpayers. At this point, the Commission is not subsidized by the City. Revenue generated defrays the costs to the City for maintenance, utilities and insurance on these properties.

At this point, Mr. Ryan made a motion to table this discussion until the November meeting. The tabling will allow members to read the proposal and be more informed for further discussion. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lord. Motion voted on and passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

Commission members were provided a copy of the approved budget for fiscal year 2009/2010.

Nothing to report on NPPC becoming mobile.

ANYTHING ELSE BROUGHT BEFORE THE COMMISSION:

Commission members were provided information relating to 2 protests received.

The first protest was related to a summons issued in December 2008. The Commission discussed the correspondence and pictures. The request was to waive the penalty fees. It was determined that the policy regarding protests had been followed, delinquent notices had been mailed to the proper address and the length of time before recontact was too long. Mr. Ryan made a motion to reduce the amount due to \$25.00, the motion was seconded by Mr. Zarnetske. The Commission voted 5-1 against the reduction. Ms. Rizzuto was directed to inform the petitioner of the decision.

The second protest related to violation of Handicap parking . The Commission members were provided with correspondence and pictures of the violation. The petitioner was requesting that the penalty be waived. It was noted by the members that this vehicle should also have been cited for being too far from the curb and being in a No Parking zone, fire hydrant. The original summons was issued on March 12,2009. The petitioner had been furnished the date of March 20,2009 to pay the original fine. The payment was postmarked on April 8,2009. There

were additional delinquent notices sent for the remaining balance. Recontact with the office was established in September 2009. A motion was made by Mr. Bergren, seconded by Mr. Zarnetske to deny the request. The motion was voted on and passed unanimously. Ms. Rizzuto was directed to inform the petitioner of the decision.

Discussion continued about the length of time a petitioner is allotted to request a hearing before the Commission. At this time, there is no standard written. It was requested that Ms. Rizzuto contact Corporation Counsel and request an opinion on a “reasonable, clear timeline” that a person has to request a hearing regarding an issued summons. Time frames were suggested from 7 days to 60 days from receipt of the initial response letter.

Ms. Rizzuto brought to the Commission the prospect of moving the Handicap spaces on Railroad Avenue. Currently, we have 2 spaces available behind the building. The proposed relocation would be to the area of the Viaduct entrance. The meters currently in that area are often vandalized/ rendered inoperable. The move would make the Handicap spaces more visible and would alleviate meter problems in the area. After discussion, the Commission members agreed that the move should be done. Ms. Rizzuto will contact DPW to arrange for the painting/signage change. The handicap space in the Cliff St. Lot was also addressed. It was determined that the space will be moved back 1 row.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

Meeting was adjourned at 6:35 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Judith A. Rizzuto, Administrator
Norwich Public Parking Commission