



**PARKING AUTHORITY SPECIAL MEETING VIA CONFERENCE CALL
March 24, 2020**

ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Rilling
Richard Brescia, Chairman
Mike Harden, Vice Chairman
Jud Aley
Tom Vetter
Eric Rains

STAFF:

Jessica Casey, Chief of Community and Economic Development
Kathryn Hebert, Director of Transportation, Mobility and Parking
Josh Morgan, Community Manager/Grants Coordinator

OTHERS:

Stathis Manousos, LAZ Parking
Rocky Legesse, LAZ Parking
George Tsiranides, Common Council

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brescia called the meeting to order at 6:02PM.

**DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON THE IMPACT OF THE CORONA VIRUS ON
PARKING OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT.**

Mr. Brescia and Ms. Hebert started the meeting by laying the ground rules of the conference call meeting.

Mr. Brescia said this issue is under constant reevaluation and will provide information to the board members twice a month and will act accordingly. He said he has laid out a plan that in his opinion is a worst case scenario that will go through the first quarter of the next fiscal year. There will be a constant reevaluation of the plan so the things that are decided today will be constantly reviewed, and if things happen to get better the plan can be adjusted and likewise if

things get worst. He said the first item that will be discussed at tonight's meeting is to begin free parking at all locations beginning April 6, 2020.

Mayor Rilling joined the call at 4:15PM.

Mayor Rilling thanked the members of the Parking Authority for volunteering their time and for the hard work that they do not only to make Norwalk a place that is business friendly, but also clean and neat by maintaining the parking lots and facilities. He also thanked Mr. Brescia for the plan that he has developed and he agrees that the plan for April should be the main focus for the Parking Authority and then revisiting it in May. He said based on the information that he has been receiving we are in for the long haul, and the kids will most likely not be returning to school this school year and are finding ourselves with tremendous expenses that were not anticipated and has allocated over \$1 million dollars in emergency funding. He said he knows the challenge before the Parking Authority is difficult but said to keep in mind that any decisions that are made today are subject to review and change.

Mayor Rilling provided an overview of what is happening in the city and said they are seeing an increase in positive cases and are trying to control peoples gathering points and each person that contracts this virus will effect someone else.

Mr. Brescia said he will collect any questions the Parking Authority members may have for Mayor Rilling and submit them to him so that he may respond back through Ms. Hebert or Ms. Casey.

Mr. Brescia said the first item that will be discussed is free parking at all locations that are managed by the Parking Authority with an effective date of April 6, 2020.

Mr. Harden said he agrees with offering free parking but asked why it has to wait until April 6, 2020 since all of the meters have already been bagged and the only left would be to turn off the paystations at the garages and lots. He said he would like the free parking implemented as soon as possible and have the Parking Authority revisit it to discuss what will need to be done for May.

Mr. Aley said he agrees with Mr. Harden and would like the free parking implemented as soon as possible and for the Parking Authority to reevaluate it monthly.

Mr. Vetter said he agrees and the sooner the better for implementing free parking and asked Mr. Legesse and Mr. Manousos why it may not be possible to implement it sooner than April 6, 2020.

Mr. Rains said he is also in agreement with free parking.

Mr. Brescia asked Mr. Manousos to explain why they had chosen the date of April 6, 2020 for implementation. Mr. Manousos said they will have the implementation for free parking ready for April 1, 2020, they were only recommending the date of April 6, 2020 to use Monday as a starting date, and to have a buffer in case there were any issues but will commit to the implementation of free parking on April 1, 2020. Mr. Brescia asked if there was an issue with

the permittees. Mr. Manousos said there is some manual function that will be required to be sure people don't get inadvertently charged, but as an effective way to manage if someone does get charged or sent in payment they will credit their account to use for a future month, but will process a refund for those customers who would no longer be needing their parking permits.

Ms. Casey what other municipalities are doing and what the logistic side is to stopping the payment in the system. Mr. Manousos said the payment system will be shut down and he was only referring to exceptions.

Ms. Hebert said she agrees with the implementation date of April 1, 2020 for free parking.

**** MR. HARDEN MOVED TO APPROVE THE PLAN OF FREE PARKING WITH A START DATE OF APRIL 1, 2020.**

****MR. VETTER SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Brescia asked the Parking Authority if when the month of April ends and if everything goes correctly if they would like to continue to offer free on street parking with the two hour limits between 9:00AM and 9:00PM.

Mr. Aley "yes" and as long as the virus is keeping businesses closed and the restaurants are doing take out only that there should be free on street parking as well as in the parking garages and lots. He also said that it should be assessed on a monthly basis.

Mr. Vetter said he is also in agreement and that it will need to be reviewed on a monthly basis as things develop.

Mr. Rains said he agrees and recommends that it be communicated to the public and stress that it will be evaluated on a monthly basis.

Mr. Harden said he agrees but his only concern is if someone does receive a parking ticket in error in the time period and that should be very carefully monitored and avoided if possible. He asked how the two hour limits will be policed.

Mr. Brescia asked Ms. Hebert to explain what type of parking tickets will be issued during the free parking phase.

Ms. Hebert said that no parking tickets will be issued with the exception of life safety parking tickets which includes parking in front of a fire hydrant, blocking a street, bus stop, handicapped spaces, etc. Mr. Harden asked isn't the Parking Authority only responsible for parking spaces and asked why that isn't a police issue. Ms. Hebert said "no" and the Parking Authority is responsible for life safety parking with the urban core and the areas that the Parking Authority has parking assets. She said the police do not typically enforce those issues unless called to do so. Mr. Brescia said as part of the message the Parking Authority will be issuing it will state the only parking tickets that will be issued during this period of time are tickets that the parker has created a safety issue but there will not be tickets issued for overstaying the two hour parking limit. Mr. Harden suggested issuing courtesy cards in lieu of parking tickets for life safety

parking for the month of April. Mr. Vetter said he does not think there will be a negativity towards the Parking Authority if someone gets a ticket for parking in front of a fire hydrant.

Mr. Brescia asked the members of the Parking Authority how they feel about setting guidelines for beyond April with offering to 50% discount for both permit and transient parkers.

Mr. Vetter said he agrees and the plan seems solid and makes sense as long as there is mechanism in place to review it and suggested a meeting in the middle of April.

Mr. Rains said he also agrees and also asked what other municipalities are doing related to permits. He is also suggesting reaching out to the Chamber of Commerce to see how its membership is doing as an indicator of when we can start to feel some sense of normalcy again.

Mr. Manousos said there is no formula that all the municipalities are using and they are all doing what is best for their community but he can contact their government services division to see if there is anything in particular that they are seeing as a trend, but he has heard in several communities that are offering free on street parking for the month of April. Mr. Rains suggested on the permit side to offer a two month time period and then reevaluate because in his opinion the people that have parking permits are more tied to their employment. He went on to say it is important that whatever the Parking Authority decides to do is perceived as going as far as we possibly can and he is less worried about the cost because the reason there is a cash reserve is for things like this.

Mr. Harden said he agrees and in this time everything is happening so quickly and just shutting it down this month is a need and a promise to reevaluate towards the end of the month is a necessity.

Mr. Aley said he agrees with offering a two month time period to the permit parkers and that it sends a good message to the public.

Ms. Hebert said that staff will need to evaluate the situation on a daily basis and get the information to the Parking Authority every couple of weeks. She discussed the cut backs in staffing and services to accommodate the substantial decrease in revenue and what it will mean to the public.

Mr. Brescia asked Mr. Legesse if when he reports on the financials if there is a way of giving an accounting of how many parking spaces there are being utilized to get a picture of where people are parking during the free parking period. Mr. Legesse said “yes” and they can do manual counts. Mr. Brescia said it will be helpful for the Parking Authority to know where the parking spaces are being utilized and where they are not.

Ms. Casey asked staff to give an update on the tickets that were being issued so that the Parking Authority is prepared to answer any questions. Ms. Hebert said as of last Thursday no parking tickets have been issued.

Ms. Hebert said that although the financials are not the main concern and there is a reserve the financials will still need to be looked at. She said she also agrees with getting an accounting of where people are parking and to the extent that we can continue.

Mr. Tsiranides asked for the people who have existing parking tickets if the Parking Authority office is still open. Mr. Legesse said “yes” and the hours are 8:00AM to 5:00PM Monday through Friday and they are accepting payments. Mr. Tsiranides asked if anything is being done for those that have missed their payment deadlines. Ms. Hebert said “yes” it will be the original amount of the ticket with no penalties.

Mr. Tsiranides said all of the ideas that have been discussed tonight are great but what is the Parking Authority planning to do strategy wise to get ahead of when this has been lifted and suggested thinking about how to get people back in the area and what types of promotions can be done. Mr. Brescia said that is something the Parking Authority will be discussing and will come up with a strategy. He went on to say the way the financials currently look and if things go the way he is suggesting which is through the month of September the fund balance will be depleted which may be close to \$3 million dollars to cover the shortfalls and what will happen after that is unknown to him at this point.

Mr. Brescia asked Mr. Morgan to post the following response by the Parking Authority:

The Parking Authority has a near term response to the issue in terms of what we are doing for the month of April, and are looking at a long term plan that will deal with the situation as the circumstances develop that will be sympathetic to both the businesses and consumers that would cover the months of May and June, and we will also be looking into the time period of July through September.

Mr. Rains asked if the projects that have been approved and funded such as the drainage work in the Webster Lot and asked if the funds can only be spent on that and if there are other projects like that if they can be kept authorized so that people can at least keep those jobs. Ms. Hebert said that the RFQ went out for the green infrastructure project and interviewed for the design and have made a selection. The team’s hope is to get the design done so the actual project can be done this year. The annual on call engineering services related to infrastructure improvements to the city parking assets also went out to bid and we have received bids back and that will come to the Parking Authority for approval.

Mr. Vetter asked if approval is needed to deplete the fund balance. Mr. Brescia said “yes” it will need to go to the Board of Estimate and Taxation and to the Common Council. Ms. Casey said she will touch base with Ms. Hebert regarding the timing. Ms. Hebert said she would like to have an approval by the Parking Authority in May to move the funds from the fund balance to the Parking Authority for operations and services. Mr. Brescia requested that Ms. Hebert and Ms. Casey put together a recommendation for the Parking Authority to discuss at the next regularly scheduled April meeting.

Mr. Brescia submitted the following Chairman's report:

Thought it would be helpful for our meeting at 4 tomorrow to summarize my Chairman's report in this memo (which will become part of our minutes for public review). This should give you more time for input and refinement of our suggested proposals. We will be forwarding more updated info from Kathy, Stathis and Rocky.

A quick recap...this all started a week and a half ago when we (Kathy-out of state on family business), Stathis, Rocky, Jesse and I began to make plans for this crisis to present to the Board. As you already know, we have been going in circles trying to finalize something for you...including the "Coronavirus Options" which was sent to you last week. Our planning changed daily (hourly??) since the pandemic concerns intensified prompting both the Governor and Mayor to issue Executive Orders to protect public health, one of the two major problems...the other being the Financial impact to both businesses and individuals. It's the financial piece that the NPA can make an important and quick impact.

When we meet tomorrow, we will be recommending some changes to the plans you have been sent. First, Suspended/Free Parking everywhere for the month of April which includes on-street (already implements), lots and garages. Norwalk will be in a "lock down" stay-at-home mode through at least April 22nd. If all goes well, we would then begin our reduced cost proposal for May and June (previously sent). You can review LAZ's updated input to see the impact on our budget and Fund Balance. We all want to see this virus under control as soon as possible, in the meantime we can try to help both individuals and businesses with financial problems that are here already.

Importantly, we are suggesting we make changes to our re-evaluation process from monthly to twice a month. Laz will be providing us with weekly input which we'll pass on to you and which may prompt another special meeting. Key element here is constant re-evaluation.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. VETTER MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MR. RAINS SECONDED THE MOTION**

The meeting adjourned at 5:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Dilene Byrd