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**PARKING AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL VIDEOCONFERENCE
AND TELECONFERENCE
FEBRUARY 24, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Michael Harden, Chairman
Eric Rains, Vice Chairman
Jud Aley
Tom Vetter

ABSENT: Jud Aley

STAFF: Jessica Vonashek, Chief of Economic and Community Development
James Travers, Director, TMP
Garrett Bolella, Asst. Director, TMP

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Harden called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

Nancy Rosett- 399 Main Avenue

Ms. Rosett stated that she chair's the Bike Walk Commission and one of the things we try to do is improve the infrastructure for bicycling in the city and have had some successes at that. She said we had conducted an inventory of all of the existing bike racks that are on city property and there is a map of those on our website. In addition, we have been working with DPW to have bike parking signs installed to indicate where bike parking is. She said we have purchased five bicycle racks and are seeking places to position them within the city, and the Parking Authority will be discussing a few of the ideas that we had related to properties that the Parking Authority owns or manages. She said she knows the Parking Authority understands the importance of parking to surrounding businesses' and attractions and hopes the Parking Authority will favorably help the Bike Walk Commission to position two of the bike racks.

2. APPROVE MINUTES FROM THE PARKING AUTHORITY MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2021.

**** THE MINUTES WERE TABLED DUE TO A LACK OF A QUORUM.**

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

There was no report given.

4. FINANCIAL AND OPERATING REPORT

Mr. Manousos reported and said there is still an erosion of revenue due to Covid-19 and parking revenue is under budget for the month as well as year to date. He said we are under budget on the expense side and have deferred a lot of the maintenance where we could and reduced payroll which brought the expenses 34% under budget.

Mr. Manousos said that the transient revenue is over 69% under budget for the month and over 71% under budget year to date.

Mr. Manousos said that the total revenue is up 8.2% compared to last month because things are beginning to reopen as well as continued enforcement, but is still down over 50% compared to last year.

Mr. Manousos said transient activity is up over 18% for the month, but is down over 50% compared to last year.

Mr. Manousos said that permit activity has been one part of the revenue stream that has been somewhat stable, but is still down over 18% compared to last year but is up almost 7% compared to last month.

Mr. Manousos said we are still seeing a large part of the revenue collected via credit cards and that 77% of the total revenue was collected through credit cards.

Ms. Vonashek said that she had requested staff to run the garages to see which ones still had a wait list and what the wait list looked like and there is still a wait list at the garages. She suggested that the Parking Authority may want to do a marketing exercise telling people they may want to get their permits earlier because the permit activity is beginning to come back up and that there is also still wait lists at the garages.

Mr. Rains asked if permit fees are back 100%. Mr. Manousos said “no” and that Webster Lot is still down by 50% and the Main and Wall Street Lot are still down by 40%.

Mr. Manousos said transient activity has dropped due to Covid-19 but is beginning to come back. Mr. Rains asked if typical enforcement has returned. Mr. Manousos said “yes” and the customer courtesy program is back to its original program.

Mr. Manousos said the revenue at the Maritime Garage is driven by the Maritime Aquarium. Ms. Valadares said they have opened the 4D Theater this week so she believes the attendance will begin to increase. She said once the construction has been completed the main entrance will go back to North Water Street.

Mr. Manousos said the Webster lot generally generates revenue from commuters and is feeling the impact of commuter traffic being down. Mr. Legesse said the movie theatre at Webster Lot has still not yet opened which is also impacting the lot. Mr. Manousos said the Pay by Cell activity at the lot is down due to the demands. Mr. Travers asked why it is so low to other areas. Mr. Manousos going forward he will report on the Pay by Cell activity per location. Mr. Travers asked if locations that are not accepting Pay by Cell what it would take to have it available. Mr. Manousos said that the equipment would just need to be purchased and suggested including that as a capital budget item discussion. Mr. Travers suggested a meeting offline to discuss further. Ms. Vonashek requested that Mr. Harden be included in the meeting.

Mr. Manousos said that Haviland Deck has seen less of an impact because of the residential parkers that are there which has help stabilize the revenue stream in the operation.

Mr. Manousos said the North Water Lot has traditionally been a strong performer due to the demands from the Maritime Aquarium as well as the establishments on Washington Street so it has only been down 29% in demands and almost 37% in revenue compared to last year.

Mr. Manousos said that Covid-19 had the biggest impact at the South Norwalk Railroad Station and the demands are down over 90% compared to last year. He said the East Norwalk Railroad Station has also been effected.

Mr. Manousos said the demands are down over 50% at the Yankee Doodle Garage but the revenue is only down over 14% due to the stability of the monthly parkers.

Mr. Manousos said the Wall Street Lot has seen a little more activity. Mr. Legesse said in the summer months on street paid parking was introduced and the revenue from the on street meters is included in Wall Street Lot. Mr. Manousos said that also pushed some of the activity into the lot. He said the demands at the Main Street Lot are very similar.

Mr. Manousos said the library lot has been basically shut down so there is no activity to report but there are still some expenses allocated there.

Mr. Manousos said the Liberty Square Lot has been more stable because of the residential parkers.

Mr. Manousos said that on demands for on street parking are down over 33% and revenue is down almost 42% compared to last year.

He Manousos reported on parking enforcement and said ticket issuance was down over 63% and revenue is down over 41% compared to last year.

Mr. Manousos reported on the Customer Courtesy Program and said for the month of January over 2,000 courtesy cards were issued over a 30 day period, over \$1,000 was given in complementary meter time and after the courtesy card expired 790 violations were issued and if the courtesy cards had been citations the value of that would have been almost \$32,000.

Mr. Manousos reported on Pay by Cell and said system-wide transactions are up over 9% compared to last month and revenue was up over 10% but year to date the transactions were down over 61% and revenue was down over 70%.

Mr. Legesse pointed out that Washington Street had averaged 5,500- 6,000 transactions per month for on street parking and that is the major decline on the on street activity. He said that a total of 27 parking spaces have been blocked off which is impacting the revenue.

Mr. Travers said that he will be meeting with LAZ staff tomorrow to see the facilities and he thinks that there are opportunities but he is concerned about the appeals. He also said that we will need to begin to look at trends as people start using the facilities again and that he has spoken with CTDOT and they said they have no expectations that they will be selling monthly passes so we will need to look at the pricing mechanism as we move forward.

Mr. Travers asked if the percentage of types of violations are reported Mr. Legesse said “yes” it is on the ticket issuance report. Mr. Manousos said that is not included in the operations report but said if he would like them included it can be added.

5. CAPITAL REPORT

Ms. Valadares reported and said the capital budget request there is zero for fiscal year 2021-22 because there were funds left over from the previous year that were not used. She said one of the big projects that will be done this year is to re-caulk the outside of the South Norwalk Railroad Station. She said the design is 95% completed and is waiting for Metro North to provide language for the force account to be included in the specification. She said that Metro North representatives also said that we will need to take care of birds and pigeons that are sitting close to the platform that have been damaging and bringing dirt to the platform so our consultant is looking at that. She said she is hoping to have the project advertised by late March or early April.

Ms. Valadares said the other capital project is the green infrastructure project at the Webster Lot and are still finalizing the design but should also be going out to bid in April.

Ms. Valadares said the city has signed the right of entry for the North Water Street Lot but she does not yet have a date when they will need the lot but she will keep the Parking Authority updated. She also said the Parking Authority has no more obligations to the East Norwalk temporary lot and should be doing nothing inside the lot but are responsible for the sidewalk until the ownership for the lot changes.

6. OLD BUSINESS

a. Operating Budget FY22, Including Alternate Budget

Mr. Vetter asked when the budget needs to be summited. Ms. Vonashek said that we still have time but her recommendation is to have it voted on by March.

Mr. Legesse provided an overview on the latest changes to the budget and said we cut back on the monthly parking revenue especially for the South Norwalk Railroad Station garage, The Maritime Garage and the East Norwalk Railroad Station.

Mr. Harden asked about the capital outlay line. Mr. Manousos said a few years back one of the Common Council members asked to see the budgets more like the city budgets look so the capital outlay is the fund balance. Mr. Rains said he finds it confusing. He also requested that “operating budget” be included on the heading of the budget, and if possible to get a sense of who is using the garages whether it be commuters or is it people using the train for other reasons so as we plan our future financial decisions we need to have a sense of we are marketing to.

Mr. Manousos reported on the expense side of the budget and said there are some deferrals of some of the expenses such as building property repairs and maintenance but all the facilities are all clean, well-lit and maintained. He also said we have decreased the budget for new vehicles but there is a rolling stock program where each year one vehicle was being replaced. Ms. Valadares suggested when looking at purchasing a new vehicle to look into an electric or hybrid option.

Mr. Manousos said of there is a decrease in the city expense side of the budget due to the retirements. Ms. Vonashek asked why the telephone account is going up 33% and suggested that number be looked at due to the drop in personnel.

Mr. Rains asked about the equipment expense paystation replacement program. Mr. Legesse said it is for when equipment needs to be replaced.

Mr. Rains said the Park Mobile Pay by Cell fees are paid by the consumer. Mr. Manousos said “yes” and that Norwalk was the first Connecticut town to use Park Mobile and at the time was set up and 100% of the parking fee goes to the Parking Authority, and the customer pays the transaction fee and when we collect the fee it goes into an operating account and Park Mobile sends an invoice that gets paid out of that account. Mr. Travers suggested that this be included in the discussion when he meets tomorrow with Mr. Manousos and Mr. Legesse.

Mr. Rains said the approach to signage needs to be looked at because there is currently too much signage. Mr. Travers agreed and said it is confusing because the more signs that are installed the more confusing it gets for people.

Mr. Harden asked when it is the condominiums responsibility versus the Parking Authority's responsibility when a vehicle damages the garage. Mr. Legesse said if the property damage is within the garage it is the responsibility of the Parking Authority, but if it is in the outside of the garage and in an area of where the condominiums are located it is their responsibility.

Mr. Rains asked about the line for capital repairs and replacement for infrastructure improvements. Mr. Manousos said that 10 years ago Desmond did a condition assessment of all of the facilities and they had recommended creating a repair and replacement account for future capital improvements and repairs so it was built into the budget. He said the Parking Authority had approved \$135,000 per year and that is what has been budgeted. Mr. Rains said that is capital improvements and asked why that is in the operating budget. Mr. Manousos said that should be transferred into the capital reserve account and that we don't manage that account so he suggested getting clarification from the finance department to see where the funds reside. Ms. Valadares added that for many years there was no capital budget request for the Parking Authority so this account was established for emergency repairs. Ms. Vonashek said she will contact the finance department to see where the funds are.

Mr. Rains said that the lights in the facilities have been changed to LED and asked if we are yet seeing the benefit of that. Mr. Legesse said the lights were paid up front so the savings will be seen in the electric consumption. Mr. Harden asked if there is a significant difference in the cost since the LED lights have been installed. Mr. Travers pointed out that the electric rates have gone up substantially effecting the savings. Mr. Legesse said according to the trend report there is a savings of approximately \$ 25,000-\$35,000.

Mr. Manousos said the only rate adjustment is at Webster Lot for \$5.00 reduction for reserved spaces as well as the monthly rate. Mr. Rains asked if the arrangement ends in 2022. Mr. Harden said "no" the arrangement is a 2% increase per year.

Mr. Rains asked what the line item for typing services are. Ms. Vonashek said that is for the meeting minutes.

7. NEW BUSINESS

a. Review of Parking Rates

Mr. Harden said he included this on the agenda because he wanted to look at the \$1.50 an hour rate for on street parking in SONO and what parking spaces are left that we are charging for now that there is no parking on one side of Washington Street. Mr. Legesse said that rate is for all on street parking all the metered spaces around SONO including the corridor on West Avenue that includes Maple and Merwin Streets. Mr. Harden asked if that was reduced to \$1.00 what impact that would have on the revenue. Mr. Manousos said we can do an analysis and report back. Ms. Vonashek said the barriers are going to be in place until March of 2023 so the analysis should include the full total of \$1.50 parking spaces and take out those two spaces as well as the free 15 minute spaces. Mr. Rains said we had also discussed not having a one hour minimum to park on the Park Mobile app. Mr. Travers said there can be a conversation with Park Mobile to reduce the time increments.

b. Bike Rack Discussion

Mr. Harden said the Bike Walk Commission has five bike racks and the last time this was discussed there were some security , safety and responsibly issues and he asked staff to see how that would work and where they would be allowed to go. Ms. Valadares said an encroachment permit would be needed for anything that is placed in the city's right of way. Ms. Valadares suggested using the locations from the proposed bike share program be used as a baseline. Ms. Vonashek said that she can find that plan and circulate it.

c. Signage/Wayfinding Discussion

Mr. Harden said the signage needs improvement across the city and could involve wayfinding and other city department involvement. He requested that this item remain on the agenda until the budget season is over and maybe create a subcommittee. Mr. Travers requested that Mr. Bolella forward Ms. Vonashek the guide that he had put together for Stamford and also suggested looking into a branding that is more intuitive.

8. ADJOURNMENT

****MR. RAINS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd