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**PARKING AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL VIDEOCONFERENCE
AND TELECONFERENCE
JANUARY 27, 2021**

ATTENDANCE:

Michael Harden, Chairman
Eric Rains, Vice Chairman
Jud Aley

STAFF:

Community Development

Jessica Vonashek, Chief of Economic and

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Harden called the meeting to order at 6:05PM.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments this evening.

2. APPROVE MINUTES FROM THE PARKING AUTHORITY MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2020.

- ** MR. RAINS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.**
- ** MR. ALEY SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. APPROVE MINUTES FROM THE PARKING AUTHORITY MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2021.

- ** MR. ALEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**
- ** MR. RAINS SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Harden reported and said we are in the second half of the year with five more months to go in the middle of a pandemic and the Parking Authority will be looking heavily at the budget.

Mr. Harden said the lot on East Avenue has been taken back by the State and Ms. Vonashek will report on the details as well as the North Water Street lot under the capital projects portion on the agenda.

5. FINANCIAL AND OPERATING REPORT

Mr. Manousos reported and said the impacts and recovery from Covid-19 are still being seen and the revenues compared to budget are down almost 58% for the month and 49% year to date as well as compared to last year.

Mr. Manousos reported on the expense side and said that Mr. Legesse and his team have been doing a very good job of managing the expenses and they are down 50% compared to budget, 33% year to date and over 28% compared to last year.

Mr. Manousos reported on the transient activity and said the demands compared to last year are still off 47% and we had assumed that transient demand was going to be 50% from pre-Covid demands as part of the pre-opening plan. He said the transient revenue year to date is down over 68% compared to budget.

Mr. Manousos said that the permit activity is down 18% but as part of the reopening plan we had assumed that permit demand was going to vary by location between 80%-100% of pre-Covid demand. He said that permit revenue accounts for 51% of the actual parking revenue, and that 76% of revenue is still be collected via credit cards. The Pay by Cell activity is still strong but has been impacted by the pandemic and the average transaction is \$2.53 for the month and in December 2019 the average transaction was \$3.65. He said compared to last year the number of transactions are down 37% and revenue is down 58%. He said the Pay by Cell activity represents approximately 17% of all transactions system wide and almost 8% of the revenue.

Mr. Manousos reported on the enforcement and said that issuance is still down 75% when the beach and Oyster Shell Park are not factored in.

Mr. Manousos reported of the Customer Courtesy program and said the number of program days was increased this year and in December there were 30 program days, over 2300 courtesy cards were and issued, \$1200 in additional meter time was given out and 667 tickets were issued after the courtesy time had expired. He said the value if tickets were issued was over \$41,000 for the month and \$311,000 year to date which is almost twice of what the twelve month period of fiscal year 2020.

Mr. Harden said it seems that on street parking is recovering faster system wide. Mr. Rains said that on street parking is most convenient and if parking overall is down that would make sense.

Mr. Harden asked if there is any cost associated with the parking lot at the Library while the lot is not being used. Mr. Legesse just the cost for snow removal and minor maintenance of the parking lot. Mr. Harden asked if there would be any cost savings by installing a chain across the lot until the Library reopens. Mr. Manousos said that staff can look into what the cost savings would be.

Mr. Aley also suggested closing the top floor of the Maritime Garage and the Yankee Doodle Garage so that there is less area to maintain. Mr. Rains suggested a portion on the Webster Lot also be sectioned off and not made available for parking. Mr. Harden said he does not recommend closing any portion of the garages at this time.

6. CAPITAL REPORT

Ms. Vonashek presented a map of the North Water Street Lot and said that staff has been talking with CTDOT regarding the Walk Bridge Project as it relates to the demolition of the IMAX Theatre and staff had requested that they consider demolishing the IMAX Theatre sooner rather than later so that it would be done prior to the peak of summer. She said that Ms. Valadares and the team had talked to CTDOT about taking the parking spaces as indicated on the map for a five month time period and would begin any time after February 1, 2021. She said that Ms. Valadares has a weekly meeting with the Walk Bridge team and in that meeting they will indicate the timing of when CTDOT will need the actual spaces and at that time she and Ms. Valadares will notify the Parking Authority as well as LAZ. She said that she had spoken to Ms. Valadares about the handicapped parking spaces and she recommended moving the spaces on a temporary basis and when CTDOT is done with the area the handicapped spaces would be moved back to their original spot. She said while she does not think it is ideal that they need the spaces she does

think they are trying to work the best they can with the city to be able to expedite the project so by the time summer comes the right of entry will be lifted and the parking spaces will be back in rotation. She also noted the CTDOT has taken properties that are adjacent to the river through eminent domain and we definitely don't want to enter one of those conversations with them so the idea is to partner with them as best we could for them to expedite the project.

Mr. Harden asked if the handicapped spaces will still be needed when the IMAX Theater is no longer there. Ms. Vonashek said Ms. Valadares said that both spaces would not be needed but will need one of the spaces and she will coordinate that the CTDOT.

Mr. Harden asked if signage from the Parking Authority will be needed. Ms. Vonashek said she thinks that signage should come from the CTDOT and they should cover the cost on that but staff will work with them to have the signage installed. She said if that changes and they feel differently she will report back to the Parking Authority but she will advocate that is a CTDOT cost.

Mr. Legesse requested that when they move the handicapped parking space that they move it closer to the pay station near the entrance.

Ms. Vonashek said that staff has been have conversations with the CTDOT regarding the East Avenue lot and the East Norwalk Railroad Station and it is her understating that they are in a position to clear the snow and do the maintenance on that lot but that LAZ will have to continue to do the maintenance on the sidewalks surrounding the lots and she has a call with them tomorrow.

7. OLD BUSINESS

a. In-person payment policy regarding tickets

Mr. Harden said this was a topic that had been discussed regarding when people bring their parking tickets in within 24 hours they would receive \$5.00 off the cost of the ticket. Mr. Rains said he thinks it is a good thing to offer but asked why people would need to pay in person to receive the discount. Mr. Legesse said making that available on line is possible but the only issue is they have is that when tickets are issued during the day they do not get exported until the following day so if someone tries to make a payment on a ticket that received on the same day they will not be able to access it online. Mr. Aley asked if the percentage of people who take advantage of this discount is known. Mr. Legesse said most people take advantage of the discount. Mr. Rains suggested changing the period to 48 hours to allow people to make the payment online so that people would not have to pay for parking while taking advantage of the discount for the parking ticket. Mr. Harden pointed out that there are a few free 15 minute parking spaces inside the Maritime Garage to go into the office and suggested that the program continue as it is.

b. Convenience fee for online payments

Mr. Legesse said that staff has reached out to Park Mobile but unfortunately at this time they are not willing to discount the convenience fee because the transactions which is their income has decreased. Mr. Rains suggested the fee be called a handling fee rather than a convenience fee and asked if there are any other vendors they offer the same service as Park Mobile.

Mr. Harden said there were discussions last summer regarding the signage and how it is written in a negative way and he feels there are more positive ways to say the same thing and suggested as we come out of this very difficult budget season and the pandemic he would like to continue the discussion.

c. Operating Budget

Mr. Legesse provided an update regarding the dumpster at the Maritime Garage and said the condo association did send out a letter advising the restaurant owner to terminate the contract.

Mr. Harden said that Mr. Legesse had sent an email regarding budget suggestions. He said that he had a conversation with Mr. Manousos because in his vision going to the Common Council requesting a \$7.3 million dollar budget in too aggressive, and the actual this year was \$5.6 million dollars so his thought was to try to put together a budget that is somewhere in the middle. He said after his conversation with Mr. Manousos they had chosen to submit a budget request of \$6.2 million dollars and he requested LAZ come up with a vision of what a Parking Authority budget for Norwalk looks like at \$6.2 million dollars a year.

Mr. Rains asked how much of the Parking Authority's revenue comes from commuter traffic and if staff has heard of any projections from Metro North as to what they are anticipating their ridership to be in the near and distant future. Mr. Manousos said he has not but that everything is very unknown because MTA would be looking at what is happening in New York City and suggested looking at all revenue sources and determine some good estimates of what percentage of transient revenue is due to commuters as opposed to other users by facility and suggested looking at each revenue segment. He said that the health of the activity and revenue stream will be tied to the vaccination of the population. Mr. Rains said the trend from what he is understanding is that everyone who used to commute is not going to start commuting again because working from home has worked too well for a lot of people and suggested looking at what other reasons why people use parking which is to come to the urban core areas of Norwalk. He said it would be interesting to have a discussion on what correlations there are if any related to increasing the vibrancy of our urban core areas. Ms. Vonashek said that she can meet with Mr. Legesse and Mr. Manousos but that the only way to do this is to make assumptions and project against those.

Mr. Rains suggested revisiting the courtesy card policy and putting it back to the original parameters which was that is a random occurrence and that the Parking Authority has gone as far as we can without not managing parking the way we should related to revenue. Mr. Harden agreed and requested that LAZ come up with a plan on how to roll the program back. Mr. Manousos suggested that the Parking Authority empower staff to run the program as it was originally intended and report back. The members of the Parking Authority agreed.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Aley asked the status of his suggestion regarding changing the parking enforcement times from 8:00AM to 9:00AM for on street parking in SONO as is already done in the Wall Street area. Mr. Harden suggested revisiting this once the pandemic is over before making any changes.

9. MOTION TO ADJOURN

**** MR. RAINS MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** MR. ALEY SECONDED THE MOTION.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30PM.
Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd