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**PARKING AUTHORITY
SPECIAL MEETING VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL VIDEOCONFERENCE AND
TELECONFERENCE
July 8 , 2020**

ATTENDANCE:

Michael Harden. Chairman
Richard Brescia, Vice Chairman
Tom Vetter
Eric Rains
Jud Aley

STAFF:

Kathryn Hebert, Director of Transportation, Mobility and Parking

OTHERS:

Stathis Manousos, LAZ Parking
Rocky Legesse, LAZ Parking

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Harden called the meeting to order at 4:30PM.

**1. APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE PARKING AUTHORITY MEETING HELD
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2020.**

**** MR. BRES CIA MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.
** MR. ALEY SECONDED THE MOTION.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. DISCUSSION-NPA RECOVERY/REOPEN PLAN

Mr. Manousos presented the operations report reopening status. Mr. Rains said that he and Mr. Aley have not had a chance to review the presentation, but pointed out that at this point what we are doing is reporting on what is actually happening against the amended budget. Mr. Rains asked if the amended budget includes the lost revenue for the removal of the 27 parking spaces on Washington Street. Mr. Legesse said the lost revenue for June and July was not included. Ms. Hebert said that the outdoor dining was not an issue at that point but as far as the activity goes for on-street parking now throughout the entire system is at 56% and the forecast was 25%. Mr. Rains suggested that a footnote be included stating that with the conversion of regular parking to outdoor dining and curbside pickup the numbers are still outperforming what were projected.

Mr. Brescia said that he had sent a memo to Mayor Rilling stating that the lost revenue between now and the middle of October will be \$52,000 and asked if the Parking Authority can request a reimbursement for the lost revenue from the state or the federal government. Mr. Harden suggested that another memo be sent to Mayor Rilling regarding the four parking spaces that are being taken for outdoor dining this week on North Main Street and requested that staff provide him with the number for the lost revenue for those spaces. Ms. Hebert said the lost revenue for the four parking spaces through the middle of October will be \$4,200.

Mr. Harden asked about the 86 expired meter tickets that were issued and the 31 for time limitations and asked how that will be explained when we had decided to only issue tickets for safety reasons. Mr. Manousos said it was decided that after the first week we would continue to issue the courtesy cards but if on return after the courtesy card had expired which is approximately 45 minutes after the expiration they would be issued a citation, so there were no tickets issued unless the courtesy cards expired. Mr. Aley asked if tickets are still being issued in that manner. Mr. Legesse said "yes". Mr. Manousos pointed out that even through the courtesy cards refer to 20 minutes that 99% of the time it is more than that. Mr. Harden said that

he feels that he is in the minority but he is not comfortable with issuing violations, and he does not think they should be issued at this time but it also looks like time limitations are the only violations that are being issued outside of safety issues. Mr. Manousos said historically expired meter violations are the single largest violations that are issued in any on street system.

3. DISCUSSION- ADDING PARKING SPACES ON WEST WASHINGTON STREET

Ms. Hebert provided an update and said at the last meeting agreed to add an additional 20 parking spaces on West Washington Street due to the fact that the Parking Authority collaborated with the business community and economic development and took 28 parking spaces out of service on Washington Street for outdoor dining and curbside pickup. It was discussed that the spaces be painted temporarily until the LOPCIP project was implemented on West Washington Street next year but in speaking with the TMP Engineering Department that is not possible because of the distance between the center line and where the parking space would end is not wide enough for it to be safe. She said the good news is that they are advancing the LOPCIP project and are collaborating with DPW and putting together the bid documents to go to bid but because it is grant funded will need confirmation approval from the State DOT and Westcog so those two things are happening at the same time. She said staff is hoping that the project will be able to go out to bid this fall and be installed by the spring, but if that does not happen they are also putting the bid documents together for the city wide line striping contract so if the confirmation that is needed from the DOT or Westcog is not received in a timely manner the other contract will be used to install the spaces and move the center line temporally, but either way the project won't happen until next year. Mr. Aley said he has been following this infrastructure project for four years and requesting parking and have been told every year that the project would happen the following year and it is very frustrating because if the parking spaces were installed four years ago the Parking Authority would have received the revenue and it would also add convenient parking. He also said based on some information that he received today the average street parking in South Norwalk is producing approximately \$99 dollars per week in revenue.

Mr. Rains asked if there is a dollar value for a DPW project that makes the process simpler. Ms. Hebert said in order to do any work in the right of way there needs to be a contract and anything over \$10,000 would need to go out bid. Mr. Rains asked if there is a process with a lesser dollar amount. Ms. Hebert said "yes" and three quotes would be required or go through a sole source process as part of the purchasing guidelines and have it approved by the Purchasing Department and the Legal Department to issue a purchase order. Mr. Rains asked if that process would be any faster. Ms. Hebert said "no" and that it is just a different process.

Mr. Rains suggested the project be tracked and requested that Ms. Valadares provide a report on a monthly basis on the status of the project.

4. DISCUSSION- STATUS- STATE OF CONNECTICUT SALES TAX NEW SALES TAX IMPLEMENTED JANUARY 2020 ON CERTAIN PERMIT PARKING SALES.

Mr. Harden said he had this item put back onto the agenda because he had a conversation with Mayor Rilling last week and although the Parking Authority and he agrees on doing this he felt the timing was terrible and requested that the item be brought back for discussion to possibly pushing it back to January 1st. Mr. Harden said since then he had a conversation with Ms. Hebert and she had explained that it is essentially just for the permit parkers and asked the

members of the Parking Authority if they had any thoughts. Mr. Brescia read the following into the record:

The Mayor's request that the Parking Authority explain their reasoning behind the decision to restart parking fees and discontinue absorbing the state enforced tax is reasonable.

In December of 2019, Mr. Brescia said that he met with both the Mayor and Henry Dachowitz (separately) to explain that the authority, as part of its new Strategic Plan, was considering options for investing some of fund balance in worthy projects to benefit the city. Our fund balance is similar to the City's "rainy-day" fund. We had built our fund to almost 3 million dollars, 1.2 million over the financially recommended amount of 1.8. I explained that among the options we were considering were:

- * a circulator- coordinating with the transit district to move people to and from SONO, Wall Street, West Avenue and East Norwalk.

- * explore options for a pathway from Yankee Doodle Garage to Wall Street.

- * beautifying the Pathway from Webster Lot to SONO

I told the Mayor that we would mention this plan when we had pre- budget meetings with BET and the Common Council for the next fiscal year. Mayor Rilling thought the concept was good.

Then came the Pandemic fears and all plans for our new Budget were turned upside down. In collaboration with the Mayor's office and Economic Development the NPA did everything we could think of to ease the financial burden that would fall on local businesses and residents.

In addition to the last week in March, the NPA on its own, suspended all parking fees on street, in lots and garages for the months of April and May resulting in a major shortfall in Revenue. At the time, I told the Mayor we were still considering the month of June, and had started a study of how we might rebound in sync with the city if the state encouraged a careful reopening. By the time we started to reevaluate June, we had learned a lesson we already knew...that free park is not without high costs. All thru April and May the prime parking locations on Washington and Main were filled with the cars of residents who, in lock down, left their cars there for days and weeks at a time creating chaos when we were trying to encourage "pick up" at area restaurants. With that in mind, NPA then evaluated a study done by Eric Raines and Jud Aley on how to gradually return to enforced parking limits. While we had bumps in the road with the June roll out, we finally agreed to start on the June date set by the Governor for the next phase of roll out.

It should be noted that the NPA had willingly sacrificed a full quarter of planned revenue to help this issue. The result, a major hit on our own "rainy day" reserve that we had hoped to apply to those projects I mentioned earlier. Our move to cease paying state tax on parking was done to protect what fund balance we had left by reducing the new fiscal budget by \$182,000 in costs. It was clearly not "a move to make money" as suggested in the Hour. The cost to the NPA for the March-June hiatus in paid parking was about \$1.8 million dollars. The Hour article described our actions as "unrelated to the economic effects of Covid19." I'm not sure where that quote came from...our actions were **ALL RELATED** to the impact of the virus. We continue to do what we can to assist this recovery and to try to protect what we can in our emergency fund so as not to be a burden on the city's budget or the taxpayers.

The Mayor suggested we should be held accountable and explain our reasoning... I hope this helps providing a clearer picture.

The Parking Authority is comprised of five local citizens, nominated by the Mayor and approved by the Common Council. There are three local businessmen, one Lawyer and a retired Corporate Executive...all volunteers sensitive to the needs of the city and willing to give of their time to make hard choices.

Mr. Rains agreed and said it is an accurate trail of what transpired and how the Parking Authority handled it, and it also makes a good explanation of why we should not continue to absorb the sales tax and if there is a desire not to have the sales tax it is not an issue with Norwalk it is an issue with Hartford.

Mr. Brescia said the Board of Estimate and Taxation had recommended that we do this particularity in the times that we are in and would not be sustainable. He said after it was voted on by the Parking Authority he received a memo from Mr. Dachowitz thanking the Parking Authority for approving and that they had done the right thing. He said in order for us to manage parking there has to be enforcement and if we don't have that we will end up back where we were before.

Mr. Manousos explained with the approval of passing on the sales tax it is only effective for the railroad stations because transient parking in the facilities for off street and on street there is no mechanism to add the sales tax to the fee. Mr. Harden asked what the savings or cost will be to extent this to January 1st. Mr. Brescia said there would be no savings if we make the decision to absorb but will add to the cost line and we are trying to protect what we can of the fund balance. Mr. Harden again asked what the cost would be to extend passing on the sales tax fee until January 1st. Ms. Hebert said \$91,000.

Mr. Vetter said that the item has already been voted on and requested that it not be included on the next agenda.

5. NEXT PARKING AUTHORITY MEETING

Regular Parking Authority meeting, Wednesday, July 22, 2020 at 6:00PM., at the Yankee Doodle Garage

ADJOURNMENT

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

**** MR. BRESCIA SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 5:25PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd