

PARKING AUTHORITY MINUTES

FEBRUARY 23, 2005

ATTENDANCE: Urban Mulvehill, Chairman; Troy Jelleretee; Stephen Bentkover; Burt Shatz

STAFF: Kathryn Hebert, Administrative Manager; Hal Alvord, Director of DPW; Ed Schmidt, Assistant to the Mayor

OTHERS: Frank Del Monaco, LAZ Parking

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm. He suggested they take the agenda out of order to take up the matter of parking on Webster Street. Mr. Mulvehill indicated that if the rates are to be changed then this would require a public hearing; he suggested that the people attending this meeting be prepared to go to the public hearing with documentation indicating that sales (where appropriate) are down.

Tom Becker (SoNo Business Association) referred to his letter sent to the Parking Authority reiterating the points of extending the grace period from 30 minutes to an hour (or 45 minutes); to change the evening time from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm with a rate of \$3 and to address traffic leaving the lot as it takes up to twenty minutes for cars to exit. Mr. Becker did acknowledge that the snow removal was much improved from previous years and thanked LAZ. Finally he asked that clearer signs be placed regarding reserved spots.

Mr. Mulvehill asked Mr. Del Monaco to summarize his solutions regarding the parking fees.

Mr. Del Monaco said prior to this evening he had received many phone calls and that LAZ is very sensitive to the impact the parking is having on businesses. He asked the merchants present to be sensitive to the impact that their proposals will have on them. He recommended that the first 30 minutes remain free and from 30 minutes to one hour there would be a \$1 charge.

Mr. Mulvehill indicated that this is just a proposal at this time and suggested it would alleviate many of the issues regarding people not wanting to pay a parking fee to collect fast food (for example); this would give another 30 minutes at the cost of \$1. He also referred to the information that LAZ had provided regarding the length of time it takes for a car to exit the lot noting that the highest is 12 minutes and the average time is 8 minutes.

Mr. Jelleretee said since this project has started they have made many changes and when the Crown Theatre system starts to work and the people move to the Maritime Garage this will help clear out the Webster lot.

There was discussion regarding the Crown Theatre System.

Mr. Bentkover commented that not every other surrounding city has parking next to where you might want to go; some walking has to be done. He indicated that the DPW have improved the lighting so there is less worry about walking through the dark streets. He added that this Authority is sensitive to the needs of the consumer.

The chairman asked for comments from the public.

Tadhg Dolhan, a night club owner noted his concern is regarding the layout of the operation saying that it takes a long time for a car to exit the lot. He suggested that two lanes become operational, one to pay and the other as a meter. Secondly, he referred to the lights saying that only two cars can exit at one time onto Martin Luther King Blvd, he suggested an exit on the other side of the lot.

Mr. Mulvehill indicated that there are funds in the budget to put add a booth to the other side of the lot.

Mr. Dolhan stated that the increase in parking is really hurting his business and his employees as they also have to pay \$5 to park.

Mr. Mulvehill referred to the plan in place for parking for employees – he explained that this is \$25 a month.

There was a discussion about the fact that the rates were changes without informing the merchants of South Norwalk.

Ms. Hebert stated that a public notice was placed in the paper each time a change was proposed.

Louis Avrck, owner of a furniture store stated that they all need to work together on this and that it needs to become finely tuned. He indicated that the main problem is with regard to cars leaving the lot; he said that he had conducted a study and the average time is 14-16 minutes – he disagreed with the numbers referred to by LAZ. Secondly, Mr. Avrck said that the second exit onto Washington needs to be better publicized.

Jin Chen, owner of a Chinese restaurant indicated that they are loosing business after 6:00 pm and they have had an increased number of calls for delivery.

Mr. Mulvehill asked if the \$1 for the hour would help.

Ms. Chen replied that it would and would give people more time to pick up their food.

There was discussion on validation.

Mr. Shatz asked if they could change the rates tonight or extend the time to 45 minutes as an indication of good will.

Ms. Hebert replied that they are bound by the Ordinance and the Charter to have a public hearing on this matter before any changes are made.

Jack Cheramonte, owner of a pizza restaurant stated that he did not receive notification that the rates would be changed. He said that the city sends out his tax and sewer bill and it would have been easy to include a letter regarding the parking. Mr. Cheramonte went on to say that the businesses are bleeding to death because while this issue is being sorted out they are continually losing customers.

Kevin Bowler indicated that he works in Stamford and he had even heard bad rumors about parking in South Norwalk there.

Jeff Esaw, a restaurant owner said that business has become so bad that he did not think he could survive another month.

There was discussion regarding the short term parking spots being taken up by permit holders.

Shahzad Mir, manager of a Subway restaurant indicated that sales have dropped so dramatically that he is barely able to pay the rent. He also mentioned the number of problems he has with kids and panhandlers and the lack of security.

Ms. Hebert asked if the police were present in that area.

Mr. Mir replied that they were not.

Mr. Mulvehill asked how he would feel about the \$1 per hour.

Mr. Mir said this is confusing and it is still a charge. He added that if sales continue like this he would not be able to renew his lease next year.

Wendy Thorpe of Planned Parenthood indicated that she had asked her patients to fill out a survey asking for their comments on the current parking situation. She also mentioned that she is losing business because she is unable to validate and that many of her patients are disgruntled due to a long walk. She asked for members of the Parking Authority to read the surveys.

Dana Bilello, a restaurant owner, stated that one of her biggest concerns is security and the number of panhandlers that come up to her customers begging for money. She said that she was under the impression that security would improve now.

Ms. Chen gave the example of kids coming into her restaurant over the holiday season when they ripped down her Christmas tree and then smacked her in the face. She said at that point she had gone to seek the help of an off-duty police officer at the movie theatre when she had been told that they would not help her and she should go to the police department.

Ms. Bilello also indicated that the reserve spots are confusing and she had received complaints from her customers. She added that she would be happy with the time being extended to 9:00 pm and for a \$3 flat rate.

There was discussion regarding the situation of the homeless people living in the parking lot.

Mr. Becker indicated that the SoNo Business Association is trying to work with the Parking Authority and LAZ. He said the problem is perception, especially regarding things not moving smoothly in the Webster Street lot.

Mr. Del Monaco added that it all costs money to have increased security.

Mr. Mulvehill stated that the Mayor is very concerned with the merchants in South Norwalk and wants this situation to work for everyone.

At this point in the meeting the Authority returned to the regular agenda.

APPROVALS/AUTHORIZATIONS

Approval of the minutes

**** MR. MULVEHILL MOVED APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 26, 2005 AS AMENDED.**

The following corrections were made:

Page one, under Railroad Stations – Add the following before the second paragraph: When the area currently occupied for parking by the Police Department becomes available they should consider a number of options not just long-term parking, for example the arrangements.... After the word curbside add: and entering the cabs on the traffic side is not the best arrangement. In the last line delete would and replace with might.

Page two, under Wall Street Area add: Getting greater owner/tenant assistance in keeping the trash area where recycling units have been allowed on municipal property should be considered as well. Under other in the title add Public Comments.

Page three, after the second line add: and the fact that the consultant years ago made an incorrect assumption on the number of visitors per vehicle caused the consultant to over estimate the number of vehicles based on the attendance figures.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Approval to install remaining pay and display units

Mr. Mulvehill stated that this does makes sense and he was in favor.

**** MR. BENTKOVER MOVED: TO AUTHORIZE THE LAZ PARKING ON BEHALF OF THE PARKING AUTHORITY, TO INSTALL THE REMAINING PAY AND DISPLAY UNITS AND METERS THROUGH DEERING CONSTRUCTION, INC., FOR A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$46,000**

ACCOUNT NO. 2140 9K 5727 (ON STREET PARKING INSTALLATIONS)

ACCOUNT NO. 2140 9F 5727 (ISAACS STREET LOT PAY/DISPLAY STATIONS – 2)

ACCOUNT NO. 2140 9E 5727 (YANKEE DOODLE GARAGE PAY/DISPLAY STATIONS – 2)

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DISCUSSION

Mr. Del Monaco compared the current figures to last year noting the difference is due to the bad weather conditions.

Regarding South Main Street there was discussion regarding the hourly rates for people using the lot on police business.

Mr. Schmidt suggested that the \$5 after 5:00 pm be removed and they proceed slowly with this until they have more certain numbers.

Ms. Hebert indicated that this would be part of the discussion during the public hearing.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Mulvehill suggested that they meet with the police department and that up to eight spaces should be marked for police business only.

Mr. Schmidt agreed suggesting they ear mark twelve spots as they can always change the number at a later date.

Regarding the pay and display units Mr. Schmidt said that the Mayor likes to see how the equipment is workings and what alternative methods can be used to which ones are most customer friendly.

Regarding the SoNo area Mr. Del Monaco relayed an account of a young lady getting her foot trapped in the door of a moving train and how the security guard (an employee of LAZ) had alerted the driver and pulled her up from the tracks. He suggested they present the security guard with a certificate of recognition.

Mr. Bentkover asked for confirmation on the date of the public hearing and asked if there was any chance to have it before March 14th.

Mr. Schmidt replied that March 14th would be the earliest as there is a lot to this fiscally and they would need time for that and to allow time in the newspaper for the ad to run.

There was further discussion on the date: it was agreed that March 14, 2005 would be the date of the public hearing.

Regarding the Webster Street lot there was discussion of the time being extended to 45 minutes and the fiscal impact this would have.

Mr. Bentkover suggested from 0 – 45 minutes would be free; from 46 minutes to 1 hour there would be a charge of \$1 and anything over would be \$5.

Discussion ensued.

Regarding the railroad stations, there was discussion about the cost of adding a pay and display meter.

Mr. Bentkover proposed \$275 (annual rate) and \$5 a day at the East Norwalk Railroad.

There was discussion of the figures.

STAFF REPORTS

**** MR. SHATZ MOVED APPROVAL OF THE BUDGETS.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Kye
Telesco Secretarial