



CITY OF NORWALK  
PARKING AUTHORITY  
SPECIAL MEETING  
3:00 p.m.  
February 18, 2016

ATTENDANCE: Julius Hayward, Chairman  
Mike Harden, Vice Chairman  
Richard Brescia  
Jud Aley

ABSENT: Olga Arteaga

STAFF: Bruce Chimento, DPW Director  
Kathryn Hebert, Administrative Services Manager  
Dilene Byrd, Secretary

OTHERS: Stathis Manousos, LAZ Parking  
Rocky Legasse, LAZ Parking  
Sonia White, LAZ Parking  
Larry Pellegrino, Pellegrini Jewelers  
Ollie O'Neil, O'Neil's Pub  
Eric Rains, ERLandscaping

Ms. Hebert introduced herself thanked the business owners for attending the meeting. She introduced the staff and the Board and said that today's meeting was scheduled this afternoon to give another opportunity to meet with the Authority that may be more convenient as opposed to coming to the night meetings which may be more difficult to attend. She said that there is a public hearing next week on February 24<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. She explained that the Parking Authority members are volunteers appointed by the Mayor and ratified by the Common Council. This current group of authority members has been dealing with sensitive and in some cases contentious issues related to parking. They have spent time talking to many in the community, gathering information, listening to input at various individual and group meetings which led to why this meeting was scheduled to not only discuss the proposed rates but also how the authority arrived at their decision.

The Parking Authority began the rate review and future planning in May 2015 with a lot of lively debates and conversations among the members as well as reviewing the information and input they received from the business community, customers, elected and appointed officials.

They also decided to enhance this process by hiring Desman Associates, a nationally respected parking consultant. Desman also reached out to many of these same constituents. They evaluated current traffic and parking conditions; their observations and recommendations served as an invaluable tool to assist the authority in making their decision. And in identifying key elements that would lead to a better parking experience for the business community, the public and essentially mutual customers.

The key elements that were identified:

- A rate structure that was confusing to the public because of varying rates in the same area
- A rate structure that did not place appropriate value on its best locations (too low/too high-short term vs long term)
- A rate structure that did not maximize the value of turnover
- Wayfinding that could be improved at the facilities
- Confusing instructions for the public trying to make a payment at the kiosks and meters
- Effective enforcement and behavior
- Perceived safety issues
- Collaborative parking programs that promote economic development
- Enhanced field ambassador presence

Ms. Hebert introduced the Chairman, Julius Hayward and the Vice Chairman, Mike Harden and members Dick Brescia and Jud Aley. Mr. Brescia read a statement from Desman Associates that stated the Norwalk Parking Authority has undertaken a process of reinvention and expansion in recent years, transitioning from a parking provider, to an advocate for downtown development. As a part of this process the Parking Authority has evaluated the current price setting practices for on and off street parking, and that the goal is to arrive at a pricing that supports the city's overall objectives for downtown development, and mobility but still allows the Parking Authority stability and growth improvement. He said that the Parking Authority has really been concentrating on how to better interact with merchants in both the South Norwalk and Wall Street area, and in this process have created a budget that included a new line item for programs, and that it is designed to give the Parking Authority some funds to work with the businesses on how to come up with ideas to generate more parking for customers.

Mr. Harden discussed the new rate proposals and said that the permits have been increased for commuters, and said that the transient rate has also increased in some locations but decreased at the Maritime Garage and at the Yankee Doodle Garage. The rate changes also include extending the meter hours to midnight. He said that the on street parking will be increased from \$1.00 to \$1.50 in the South Norwalk area and the

biggest reason for that is to encourage short term turnover and direct long term parkers to parking facilities as well as to normalize the rates.

Mr. O'Neil said that the biggest issue that he hears from his customers is not necessarily the cost of parking but the cost of the tickets, and that fighting the ticket is more trouble than what it is worth. Mr. Aley said that the rate structure includes extending the timing of the parking on the street to midnight, so that should create more short term. He also said that the time restriction at night has been increased from two to three hours since the authority found that most people are parked around 2.5 hours on average. Ms. Hebert said that Desman Associates had also done an evaluation of surrounding towns and their overtime parking rates are in some cases higher and range from \$20 to \$35. Mr. O'Neil said that the revenue collections make LAZ more money. Ms. Hebert clarified that LAZ Parking makes no money on issuing tickets, and that there is a management agreement and they are paid \$100,000 per year only since 2003 with no increase. Mr. Harden said that in terms of enforcement activity that Norwalk is substantially more lenient in the number of parking tickets issued per year compared to surrounding communities. Currently Norwalk issues around 22,000 tickets down from 50,000 per year several years ago. Mr. Aley also mentioned that LAZ is penalized a financial percentage for writing bad tickets. Mr. Hayward asked the business owners if they are aware of the Pay by Cell option, and said that the Parking Authority can provide literature on the program to be handed out at their establishments. Mr. Harden suggested that this be communicated to the wait staff who has more interaction with customers. Ms. Hebert said that the pay station kiosks in the lots have recently been upgraded to pay by plate, giving the customer flexibility of having to only pay once and be able to go in and out of a parking facility instead of having to pay each time they left and came back. She said that this also reduces erroneous tickets and is ADA and chip and pin compliant.

Mr. Pellegrino suggested that the fee for the meters stay at \$1.00 and if needed increase the fee in the lots to \$1.50. Ms. Hebert said that there is a validation program that as a retail owner instead of having quarters that the business owner can purchase tokens at a discount and give them out to their customers to put in the meters. Mr. Pellegrino said that there have not been meters in the Wall Street area for over 10 years and that it is unfair that the rates keep increasing in South Norwalk while there is free two hour parking there. Ms. Hebert said that the Parking Authority has discussed this and will be changing very soon and that meters will be put back in the Wall Street area.

Mr. Chimento spoke and said that the Pearl project on Washington Street is almost completed and that the street will be widened and the sidewalks and crosswalk will be replaced. He said that the work should begin in April and be completed sometime in May.

Mr. Hayward thanked the business owners for attending and said that as Board members they need to do a better job of explaining new technology to the business owners.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45PM