



**PARKING AUTHORITY
Special Meeting
BUDGET WORKSHOP
JANUARY 13, 2020**

ATTENDANCE:

Richard Brescia, Chairman
Jud Aley
Eric Rains
Tom Vetter

STAFF:

Jessica Casey, Chief of Community and Economic Development
Kathryn Hebert, Director of Transportation, Mobility and Parking
Dilene Byrd, Secretary

OTHERS:

Stathis Manousos, LAZ Parking
Rita Azrelyant, Consultant

Mr. Brescia called the meeting to order at 5:55PM.

Mr. Brescia started the meeting by asking the Parking Authority members if they had any thoughts or changes they would like to make to the budget. He said his thoughts regarding the budget is to adhere to the Strategic Plan. He said that he has met with Mr. Dachowitz, City of Norwalk CFO last month. Mr. Brescia said he had wanted to meet with Mr. Dachowitz as the Parking Authority is putting the budget together for next year because there are some things we probably would not include in the budget but are in the strategic plan. Mr. Dachowitz said that he thinks if the Parking Authority comes up with a concept and there is no funding for the fund

balance may be used. He would be happy to review the financial merits and share his opinion. Legal and Common Council would be the final decision makers.

Mr. Aley asked about the increase in the salary and benefits for parking personnel. Ms. Hebert said that is a contractual obligation for LAZ employees.

Mr. Rains joined the meeting at 6:05PM.

Mr. Aley said he does not agree with the proposed increase from \$1.00 to \$1.50 at the Webster Lot because that will put the lot on par with on street parking, and if more income needs to be generated to either increase the rate at the South Norwalk Railroad Station or increase Webster Lot transient rate to \$1.25 so it is still less than on street parking. Mr. Aley said based on everything that he has read off street parking must be less than on street parking. Mr. Brescia said he agrees with Mr. Aley for the same reason and he is not in favor of the increase. Mr. Vetter said there is already too much demand at the Webster Lot as well as on street parking. Mr. Brescia said the Parking Authority is aware there are issues with Webster Lot and will deal with them mid and long term. He said he does not think it would be a positive good will issue for the Parking Authority to raise the rates. Mr. Vetter said the only way he agrees with raising the rate is it were coupled with a plan for repairs in the immediate future. Mr. Manousos the reason for the proposed rate increase was due to supply and demand which creates a lack of available parking spaces for the merchants. He said that commuters park there in the morning since the max rate is \$8 vs \$12 at the south Norwalk railroad station.

Mr. Aley suggested a fixed route for the circular vs. the micro transit based on suggestions that he had received.

Mr. Aley suggested street trees on Main Street. Ms. Hebert suggested collaborating with the Tree Advisory Committee. Ms. Casey said there is \$50,000 in the small business for street improvements for Wall Street and West Avenue so if the Parking authority was to put a portion in the city can then match it under the community development budget.

Mr. Aley suggested a walkway from the Yankee Doodle Garage to Belden Avenue. He also suggested trash pick on a daily basis especially in South Norwalk. Ms. Casey said that Mr. Shockley has two teams one that does general neighborhood pickup and the other one is through STAR and she has requested \$30,000 from CBDG dollars to ramp up the two groups to include the SONO area.

Mr. Vetter asked why the meter revenue has gone up 18%. Ms. Hebert said that is due to the additional multi- space meters on Wall Street and additional meters in the West Ave area. Mr. Brescia asked staff if additional paystations should be added to make a shorter walk for customers. Mr. Manousos said that staff has walked the current locations and feels that there are sufficient pay stations and there is one paystation for every 7-10 parking spaces. He said that a lot of people use the Pay by Cell and suggested promoting that rather than investing and installing additional paystations

Mr. Vetter asked if the number of full time employees will change. Ms. Hebert said “yes” and will be 40 FTE and provided a background and said that when the Parking Authority was created in 2002 there were five parking enforcement officers who worked for the City of Norwalk that are supervised by LAZ, and there is an agreement with the 2405 union that states once a city parking enforcement officer vacates the position the position converts to a city laborer position. She said within the first two years three after the NPA was created in 2002, 3 of the positions became vacant and were converted to laborer positions and as of December 31, 2019, there is only one City of Norwalk parking enforcement officer so the budget has been reduced to reflect that fact that the Parking Authority is no longer paying for the salary and benefits of the one parking enforcement position, but LAZ will need to take over those services so there is an increase in the budget \$154,000 to reflect those services and additional FTE.

Mr. Vetter said the parking spaces on Main coming from Burnell Blvd. are creating a blind spot around the corner and suggested look at the location when there are cars parked in the parking spaces.

Mr. Vetter suggested that the \$8,500 that was collected in meter revenue during the grace period in the Wall Street area be used for good will.

Mr. Rains asked how the condo fees at the Maritime Garage work. Ms. Hebert said the Parking Authority pays the association and the garage represents 80% of the shared space.

Mr. Rains said if the Parking Authority will have a role in economic development there will also be a financial role and asked if there should be some representation of that in the budget. Mr. Brescia said he has spoken to Ms. Casey about that and she has been looking at identifying what the parking program line item is specifically for and how it is funded. Mr. Rains said he thinks it is important to acknowledge how it is funded.

Mr. Brescia asked if short term parking should be looked at in SONO area. Mr. Aley said there are already two locations with 15 minute free parking. Mr. Brescia said there are some guidelines in the strategic plan and one was to deal with the Uber/Lyft community and asked the Parking Authority if staff should develop a plan. Mr. Aley said with the individual meters in SONO he does not think there is a need for them at this time and he has not heard a lot of people advocating for short term parking. Mr. Rains suggested maybe we should explore making an adjustment on the app so people don't have to pay for a full hour. Ms. Hebert suggested staff do a conceptual plan for curb management outside of the budget process. Mr. Rains said that will be very helpful in having an ongoing dialogue.

Ms. Casey said the promenade from Yankee Doodle Garage to connect Wall Street or Belden Avenue is important. She said that there was a pass through from the post office parking lot that was closed off after September 11th and installed fencing around the perimeter for increased security. She said the library has spoken to them to get direct access to the Yankee Doodle Garage but the post office is not very open to it.

Ms. Casey discussed structured parking at Webster lot so that it not only serves 50 Washington Street but also serves the rest of the neighborhood and she has been working with the

Redevelopment Agency on putting out an RFQ that would look at responses from private developers for what they would need, and how they see development of the Webster Lot taking into account the SONO Railroad Station. She said whether the Parking Authority budgets for that or not but be able to support the study or plans and design will be a big conversation over the next year. Mr. Rains suggested those are traffic projects. Mr. Brescia said they don't impact this budget but the Parking Authority will be very much involved with the project at the SONO railroad Station including, if the project moves forward, how to handle the disruption to commuter parking that will take place during construction. Ms. Casey said they will need to figure out how involved the Parking Authority wants to be upfront before the revenue and expenses hit the budget in the upcoming fiscal years, and how involved they want to be in the planning and forecasting of what the partnerships and agreements will look like for future parking in those lots. Mr. Rains said all of the components of the project won't be weighed in by the Parking Authority and the Parking Authority will weigh in how to deal with the impact. Ms. Casey said that the Parking Authority has the opportunity to be much more involved and play a much stronger role if the Parking Authority chooses to with their ability to bond and think about what the negotiations look like. Mr. Rains suggested that the NPA discuss the level of energy used at the Webster Lot and should maintain a role similar to East Norwalk for the South Norwalk Railroad Station because there is momentum behind that and the Parking Authority will manage what they need to. Ms. Hebert said the beginning part of a project is a critical part for the Parking Authority to be involved in because at the Maritime Garage the Parking Authority had come in at the end and was too late so she thinks this is a good turning point for the Parking Authority. Mr. Rains said if the Parking Authority is going to establish a role he would like to see the funds that have been requested for the SNRR to carry over to the 21/22 fiscal year and requested the NPA evaluate money specifically for the Webster Lot for this budget year. .

Ms. Casey discussed the parklet program and said there is an opportunity for the Parking Authority to pilot the program but the parking revenue for the space would be lost during the program but the parking space can be leased to the revenue can be returned in some way. She asked if the Parking Authority would like to help with the piloting of the program and establish the build out of the parking spaces. Mr. Brescia asked how many parking spaces would be needed. Ms. Casey one or two in both SONO and Wall Street area and Ms. Church will assist on an application process. She said that she will put a proposal together and email it to the Parking Authority before the end of the week. Mr. Brescia suggested two options one for each district that we can evaluate.

Ms. Casey said that she would like to work on an analysis and that she and Mr. Brescia had met with Mr. Oz a number of times over the last year and he has 40 parking spaces in the Webster Street Lot. She said he has requested they look at the parking rates that go along with the 40 parking spaces and one of his comments has been is that the building is occupied 75% and have discussed a potential sliding scale for the rates as occupancy increases but there would need to be boundaries and a criteria established.

Ms. Casey discussed public art and how it can be incorporated into the neighborhoods with the parking garages. She suggested a budget for parking programs. Mr. Brescia said there is a budget of \$200,000 for parking programs and requested that Ms. Casey provide a list of potential programs. Mr. Manousos said that he will begin to itemize the elements of the programs.

Mr. Brescia asked if there is a way to reduce the cost of the Park Mobile convenience fee to .20 cents and the Parking Authority help to reduce part of the cost. If it had been done this year the impact would have approximately \$10,000 for half of the reduction. Mr. Brescia suggested creating a line item in the budget for the program. Mr. Manousos said Pay by Cell convenience fee would not be anything that would matter to the public as they are already using and the demand and usage continues to increase substantially and suggested doing something that has more visibility related to economic development.

Mr. Manousos said the financial impact to the Webster Lot is approximately \$145,000 related to recommendation in transient hourly rate increase from \$1.00 to \$1.50. He suggested that if the Parking Authority wants to make a change there is still the issues of commuters parking in valuable parking spaces in the Webster Lot and suggested tiered type of rates for daily long term parkers to discourage the commuters from parking to create additional parking capacity for the businesses around the area. Mr. Brescia suggested that be included in the budget. Mr. Brescia also suggested an opportunity to work with the mall regarding offering parking for the commuters for the South Norwalk Railroad Station.

Ms. Hebert said salary and benefits are included in the budget for a parking position and it was put in the budget last year and is budgeted but it never got created by the City of Norwalk. She said that staff was told to include it again this year and instead of hiring a full time employee they had hired Laybel Consulting. Mr. Aley asked what the breakdown of the new position is. Ms. Hebert said the salary is \$97,748 plus benefits which is information from the City's Finance Department.

****MR. VETTER MOVED TO ADJOURN**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:55PM.