

Draft to be Approved
Parking Authority
April 7, 2014

**MINUTES
TOWN OF DARIEN
PARKING AUTHORITY
SPECIAL MEETING**

April 7, 2014

A special meeting of the Parking Authority was held on Monday, April 7, 2014. In attendance were First Selectman Stevenson, Selectmen Hall, Marks, Nielsen and Tierney.

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectman Stevenson called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Susan Cameron, Chair of the Planning & Zoning Commission noted that growth in the Downtown has created parking pressures which are a result of development success. She was hopeful of improvements to the system. She acknowledged the past disconnect between Planning & Zoning approvals and parking. She also highlighted a potential development which had its permit extended by State statute which is a factor in parking decisions. First Selectman Stevenson requested a comprehensive review of parking regulations used by the Planning & Zoning Commission.

John Sini stated that parking was a complicated issue with countervailing forces, but emphasized the need for some capacity in the Downtown to encourage growth. He encouraged looking at other solutions like on-street parking and changing hourly parking. He added that as a commuter he felt that parking rates were undervalued and that permits should be right priced to the market.

Reece Hutchison thanked the Authority for starting a process and emphasized downtown parking needs.

Jim Cameron stated that there were no easy solutions. He worried that the lack of commuter parking impairs the economic life of the community and property values. Better parking would make the trains more accessible. He asked the Authority to do the right thing for the most people. First Selectman Stevenson noted that all comments focused on striking a proper balance for competing interests and that the Authority have to do what is best for the majority.

PRESENTATION Providing Overview of Parking System

Town Administrator Kilduff provided a presentation outlining the current state of the parking system and the challenges which are presented to the Town.

Issues of parking supply and expectations of all parking being close and convenient were reviewed. Also discussed has the delineation of roles and responsibilities for parking and

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the different policies that relate to parking in town-owned facilities compared to lots on state-leased land.

Downtown and Darien Railroad Station parking were reviewed at some depth describing the different parking areas, the parking inventory as divided by permit, daily parker and hourly parking spaces, and the length of waitlist maintained for different parking areas. A detailed review of Noroton Heights Railroad Station parking was also given describing the parking inventory by permit and daily parking space as well as the length of the waitlist.

Daily and permit parking rates were reviewed in comparison to other rates charged along the main line with daily parking of \$3 below the average for the line and \$345 for permits compared to surface lots and parking garages. A history of rate increases was also supplied along with a discussion on where parking revenue is allocated and spent.

The mix of daily spaces to permit spaces was compared across the main line. The average space mix is 75% permit and 25% daily parkers. Darien and Noroton Heights stations are below average in this aspect. To reach the average 250 daily spaces in Darien would have to be converted to permit spaces and 122 daily spaces at Noroton Heights would have to be converted to permit spaces.

The oversell rate for commuter lots was also compared on a regional basis. Selected stations were noted which has capacity for more parkers. These spaces coincided with high rates charged for parking garages.

Several parking ideas and their impacts were reviewed including changing the ratio of daily and permit spaces, charging a fee to stay on the wait list, converting Grove Street permit parking area to downtown parking and the construction of a parking structure. Details for the impact on changing the daily to permit space ratio was described further by identifying the number spaces to be changed, the lots that would be impacted and potential budget impact. Details for converting Grove Street to downtown parking was also described further including the number of permit parkers to be relocated, the need to determine which parkers would continue to use Squab Lane parking area with their permit, removal of voucher spaces to accommodate those removed from Grove Street, and the need to monitor the budget impacts of the change closely.

The presentation ended by highlighting the need for the Parking Authority to develop a set of goals for parking which could drive the decision-making process and establishes priorities for the parking system.

Following the presentation, the Authority members questioned residency rules in effect for certain parking lots, the oversell rate for permits, the concept of the Parking Authority issuing its own debt to finance improvements, the use of spaces and available funds for capital improvements in the Parking Fund. Discussion also included the history of the voucher parking program and the areas dedicated to vouchers. Rate setting for parking

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fees was also reviewed for the Authority. The Authority agreed to the need for a comprehensive plan with short-term and long-term objectives.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Discuss Parking Policy Goals

First Selectman Stevenson suggested that goal setting should take place at a future meeting. She referred to the need to discuss policy decision, potentially reallocate voucher/permit parking and identify the appropriate level of study which could be beneficial. It was suggested that that garage feasibility study funds might be re-purposed to other parking management assessments

b) Discuss Future Items for Consideration

An analysis of downtown permit approvals compared to permits issued should be completed to verify the volume of permits given for businesses. First Selectman Stevenson wanted to see the Parking Authority participate in the Planning & Zoning approval process.

ADJOURNMENT

The Parking Authority adjourned the meeting at 9:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Karl F. Kilduff

Town Administrator