

City of Birmingham
ADVISORY PARKING COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING

Birmingham City Hall Commission Room
151 Martin, Birmingham, Michigan
Wednesday, March 4, 2020

MINUTES

These are the minutes of the Advisory Parking Committee ("APC") regular meeting held on Wednesday, March 4, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. by Chairman Al Vaitas.

1. Rollcall

Present: Chairman Al Vaitas
Vice-Chairwoman Gayle Champagne
Richard Astrein
Anne Honhart
Steven Kalczynski
Judith Paskiewicz (arrived 8:06 a.m.)
Lisa Silverman (left at 9:15 a.m.)

Absent: Lisa Krueger
Michael Horowitz
Jennifer Yert

SP+ Parking: Sara Dixon
Jay O'Dell

Administration: Tiffany Gunter, Asst. City Manager
Michael Albrecht, Police Commander
Laura Eichenhorn, Transcriptionist

2. Recognition Of Guests

Kevin Denha, owner of 700 S. Old Woodward, said he was present to share his perspective with the APC regarding being a landlord and retailer in Birmingham.

Missy Rush, one of the co-owners of the Community Yoga Studio at 555 S. Old Woodward, said she was present to talk to the APC about parking availability in front of her business.

Motion by Mr. Astrein

Seconded by Mr. Kalczynski to switch items seven and eight on the agenda, with the Discussion of the Downtown Parking Meter 1 Hour Limits to now occur before Board Review And Comment on the Master Plan.

Motion carried, 6-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Astrein, Kalczynski, Champagne, Honhart, Silverman, Vaitas

Nays: None

3. Minutes Of Regular APC Meeting Of February 5, 2020

Motion by Mr. Astrein

Seconded by Ms. Champagne to approve the minutes of the regular APC meeting of February 5, 2020 as submitted.

Motion carried, 6-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Astrein, Champagne, Honhart, Kalczynski, Silverman, Vaitas

Nays: None

4. Project Updates

A. Structural Assessment Program

- i. N. Old Woodward Façade Replacement
- ii. Pierce Street Drainage

ACM Gunter summarized the item memorandum contained in the meeting's agenda packet.

B. Parking Application

Mr. O'Dell presented the item. He explained:

- CivicSmart is having to re-write their API to provide SP+ with all the information they need to create a functional mobile parking application. An API is the program that allows the CivicSmart platform and the SP+ mobile parking application to communicate.
- There is no timetable for completion of the API, but once it is complete it should be possible to roll out the mobile parking application soon after.

C. Evening Meters Limits – 4 Hours

Police Commander Albrecht and ACM Gunter summarized the item memorandum contained in the meeting's agenda packet.

D. Monthly Permit Sales

ACM Gunter summarized the item memorandum contained in the meeting's agenda packet.

In reply to Dr. Silverman, ACM Gunter said that 3,506 unique individuals were still on the waiting list.

5. BSD Funding Request: Construction Related Activities – Action

ACM Gunter and Mr. Astrein summarized the item memorandum contained in the meeting's agenda packet.

Dr. Silverman asked how the APC made sure that the proposed expenditure and previous similar expenditures are beneficial for the the City.

ACM Gunter explained that anecdotally people are unwilling to come into downtown Birmingham to eat and shop without sufficient mitigation of the parking issues caused by construction. She said that the City's past efforts to mitigate parking shortages from construction have allowed many businesses in the City to even better their sales during the duration of construction.

Dr. Silverman expressed concern that the APC was not being provided with sufficient data to prove these benefits, even if they are being anecdotally reported.

ACM Gunter said that while she did not have a quantitative analysis, other cities' experiences have shown that if parking issues are not actively mitigated during construction then the merchants tend not to fare as well. She added that the substantial usage of Birmingham's valet services during the N. Old Woodward project do demonstrate the necessity of taking steps to mitigate parking shortages during construction.

Dr. Silverman said that in her anecdotal research into the valet services she has been unable to find any Birmingham residents who report using or valuing the valet parking. She said she was not sure how many of the users of the valet services are Birmingham residents.

Mr. Kalczynski said the APC should wait to decide until it has more information regarding Dr. Silverman's inquiries.

ACM Gunter told the APC that the project would be commencing in April 2020.

Mr. Kalczynski asked if that meant the City had already spent the money before the funding was approved by the APC.

Mr. Astrein commented that the project was supposed to start in March 2020, and stated that the project was as a result already running a month behind.

ACM Gunter said that if the APC wanted to wait for more information, it would mean the project would have to be delayed another month.

Mr. Astrein asked what benefit the further delay would yield.

Mr. Kalczynski asked what the credibility of the APC is if an item is presented for them to vote on when the money for that item has already been spent.

ACM Gunter clarified that the money had already been budgeted for through the City budgeting process. She said that if the APC needed to wait until April 2020 to decide on the item that the project would have to wait. She said she could see the detriment in delaying the BSD's ability to begin the promotion until May 2020, but said if that was the will of the APC then that is what would occur.

Mr. Astrein said that the upcoming construction season was likely to result in very challenging traffic and parking situations for businesses in the City, and that not having the funding would worsen those circumstances substantially.

Mr. Kalczynski noted that the BSD already had \$175,000 budgeted for this promotional project which the BSD could begin spending in the interim while waiting for APC's decision on the remaining \$125,000 which would come during the April 2020 meeting.

Mr. Astrein asserted that the money being requested from the APC is raised from the merchants and businesses in the downtown, and that approving the further \$125,000 is essentially allowing those businesses to spend their own money on the project.

ACM Gunter clarified that the funds are raised by fees charged to users of the Birmingham parking system.

Mr. Kalczynski said he would like a breakdown of what exactly the BSD would be spending its pledged \$50,000 in marketing funds on, and what the BSD would be spending the APC's additional \$50,000 in marketing funds on.

Ms. Champagne said that the information Mr. Kalczynski was requesting was available for last year's expenditure. She said that most of the funds went to internet-based marketing in 2019, and that this year the scope would be narrowed even further to specifically address residents of Grosse Pointe, Royal Oak, and Birmingham.

ACM Gunter said she reached out to BSD Director Ingrid Tighe to see if she could provide more insight to the APC during the present meeting.

Mr. Kalczynski said that it was presumptuous for the City to begin spending the money on this project prior to the APC rendering a decision.

ACM Gunter acknowledged Mr. Kalczynski's statement. She commented that this discussion was proceeding very differently than a similar conversation the APC had in 2019 regarding marketing and valet services for that year's construction period.

Mr. Astrein stated that in 2018 the City had a much more vibrant economy, and that any actions that could be done to help Birmingham's merchants in these more uncertain times, especially in light of the Covid-19 issue, would be wise to undertake.

Dr. Silverman said that while she did not want to be negative, having approved a program in 2019 does not necessitate approving a similar program for 2020.

ACM Gunter stated that if there was a possibility that the APC would not approve the requested \$125,000 then the BSD could need to reconsider their exposure risk and how they would structure their marking and valet program during the 2020 construction season. She then asked Chairman Vaitas for direction as to what the next steps should be regarding the discussion of this item.

Ms. Champagne suggested that two votes could be held, one on the marketing funding and one on the valet services, since the funding the valet services would be uncontroversial.

Dr. Silverman asked how the APC knows for sure that valet services during construction season are valuable.

Mr. Astrein stated that during the 2019 construction season the use of valet services more than quadrupled when compared to use in the construction off-season.

Dr. Silverman said the APC should have access to a clear figure indicating the return on investment resulting from funding the valet services.

Ms. Champagne said that could only be determined by knowing the revenues of all the businesses that benefit from the valet services during the construction season.

Dr. Silverman confirmed that to be the case, and said it should be possible to know whether the revenues are more than the approximately \$667 per day the APC would spend for valet services.

In reply to Mr. Astrein, ACM Gunter stated that 53 on-street parking spaces will be unavailable on Maple during the 2020 construction season.

Mr. Astrein said that businesses in Birmingham would be severely negatively impacted without valet parking and adequate advertising of how the valet parking will work during the 2020 construction season.

Dr. Silverman said she was clear on why funding for marketing and valet services should be spent in advance of the 2020 construction season, but that she was less clear on why the APC should be providing part of said funding.

Since the APC is responsible for managing parking in Birmingham, and the 2020 construction season will be reducing the number of available parking spaces in the City, it is appropriate for the APC to consider funding projects that can mitigate the parking

loss, ACM Gunter explained. She said the alternative is that people may just not come into Birmingham to shop or dine during the 2020 construction season.

Ms. Honhart said it was in the best interest of the APC to support these parking-loss mitigation measures because while Birmingham is fortunate to have many small businesses, they may not be able to weather the substantial loss of parking during construction without City funding and support.

Mr. Kalczynski reiterated that it is inappropriate for City staff or other Boards to assume that any item before the APC will necessarily be approved just because it had been approved in years prior.

ACM Gunter acknowledged Mr. Kalczynski's statement.

Dr. Silverman said that while she appreciated the discussion, she would not describe the information that the APC had been provided with for the item as thorough.

Chairman Vaitas indicated to the APC that he would accept a motion at this time.

Motion by Mr. Astrein

Seconded by Ms. Champagne to recommend the \$125,000 expenditure in support of the BSD reconstruction marketing campaign and valet parking services.

Motion carried, 5-2.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Astrein, Champagne, Honhart, Paskiewicz, Vaitas

Nays: Kalczynski, Silverman

Chairman Vaitas thanked everyone for their participation in the discussion.

Ms. Honhart echoed Chairman Vaitas' comment, adding that she hoped all members of the APC would continue to bring up their comments and concerns in the future as well.

6. Proposed Construction Valet Plan – Action

ACM Gunter summarized the item memorandum contained in the meeting's agenda packet. She confirmed for Chairman Vaitas that if the proposed number of valet stands proved to be insufficient the APC could always discuss the possibility of adding more. She said that the City does not anticipate there being any capacity issues due to the temporary addition of a number of valet spaces during the construction season.

Ms. Champagne and Chairman Vaitas both said they thought the proposal was very well thought out.

Motion by Dr. Paskiewicz

Seconded by Mr. Astrein to approve the proposed plan for the complimentary valet locations for the 2020 Maple Road construction project, which include the closure of Martin Street to function as a valet staging area.

Motion carried, 7-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Paskiewicz, Astrein, Champagne, Honhart, Kalczynski, Silverman, Vaitas

Nays: None

7. Downtown Parking Meter 1 Hour Limits – Discussion

ACM Gunter summarized the item memorandum contained in the meeting's agenda packet.

Mr. Astrein said increasing meters to two hours in the core downtown area of Birmingham could have an extremely detrimental impact on the businesses in that area which rely on frequent parking turnover to get new customers in. He said he would not support increasing the meter time in that area.

ACM Gunter said she spoke with other local municipalities that increased their meter times. Those municipalities reported that there was little-to-no change in parking behavior. She said the municipalities noted that people tend to feed the meter to the time limit just in case, but do not tend to stay any longer than they otherwise would have.

Dr. Paskiewicz said it would be worth considering different hour maximums for parking in different areas of the City, echoing Mr. Astrein's comment that increasing the parking time allowed in the core area could be detrimental to businesses. She added that the issue the City is having with employees staying all day in metered parking spaces and just feeding the meter will likely be exacerbated by increasing the time limit on the meters.

Mr. Kalczynski noted that one hour is likely not long enough for personal services businesses located in the City or for dining. He said that increasing the hour limits could benefit those businesses in the City.

Dr. Silverman ventured that if the metered time increased people might be more likely to visit other businesses after visiting their destination.

Mr. Astrein said that retail trends indicate that most shoppers now do 'destination shopping', where they go directly to whatever business they are visiting, return to their vehicles and then leave the area. To illustrate this trend he explained that shoppers in malls used to stay for about two-and-a-half hours, and now that figure is down to under one hour. Mr. Astrein also stated that Birmingham is one of the only local cities that has a vibrant daytime retail scene, so that it makes sense that other municipalities' parking times are different.

Chairman Vaitas invited public comment on the matter.

Ms. Rush, co-owner of Community Yoga Studio (CYS) at 555 S. Old Woodward, explained that all classes in the studio run for 60 minutes, and outside the building there is only 60 minute parking. She explained that the studio has received a number of complaints from yoga students as a result, and that the business has seen a loss of students to other yoga studios in the area with more ample parking. She said that she is a Birmingham resident, and takes advantage of two hour parking when it is available to visit a number of businesses. She said CYS would benefit even from an increase to 90 minute parking meters, although two hours would be preferable.

Mr. Astrein noted that if the 90 minute meters remain occupied for the whole time, then the people hoping to attend the next class at CYS may still face limited parking with the meters full from the previous round of yoga students.

Ms. Rush said the 15 minutes between yoga classes would likely allow enough time for the meters to clear in order for the next round of yoga students to find parking.

Mr. Denha, owner of 700 N. Old Woodward and 574 N. Old Woodward, said it is difficult for businesses to attract and maintain customers who frequently risk getting tickets due to parking meters having too-limited time allowances. He agreed with Mr. Kalczynski's statement that an hour parking meter is not long enough for personal services businesses. He said:

- That even a small increase 70 minutes might be more beneficial.
- One of the largest concerns his tenants express to him is regarding a lack of sufficient parking for employees.
- It would benefit everyone if the City maintained more regular communication with the businesses in the City in terms of parking needs and concerns.
- The meters in the south end of the City should be 70 minutes or a bit longer. The meters against the condos in that area could go to 70 or 75 minutes, and the ones opposite the condos could remain at an hour.
- The City should also encourage the businesses to have discussions with their employees about where it is most beneficial to park.
- He would also bring other landlords to the APC meetings to provide insight on what might be helpful.
- Retail is changing, and salons and yoga students and similar businesses are the ones that can pay the rent. Making sure that their customers are able to find sufficient parking is in the interests of everyone in the City.

In reply to Dr. Paskiewicz, ACM Gunter said that the study done by Nelson Nygaard regarding the City's parking system is available on the APC webpage on the City's website.

ACM Gunter said it seemed like there needed to be one more conversation on this topic to clarify thoughts, and that the date for the public hearing on the item could be decided during the APC's next meeting. She said she would also be able to provide the results from the parking survey at the APC's April 2020 meeting, which would help guide the conversation regarding meters.

8. Master Plan: Board Review And Comment

ACM Gunter summarized the item memorandum contained in the meeting's agenda packet. In response to a number of members of the APC saying they wanted more time to review the materials, ACM Gunter said she would communicate that to Planning Director Ecker and that the APC could compose their comments during the April 2020 meeting. She said she would also go through the documentation and highlight the portions relevant to the charge of the APC.

The APC also agreed it might be worthwhile to schedule an additional meeting to discuss the topic more thoroughly. ACM Gunter said she would try to find an additional meeting date that worked for the APC members.

9. Downtown Parking Survey – Update

No discussion.

10. Future Parking Demand Strategy – Discussion

No discussion.

11. Parking Utilization Report And Financials

ACM Gunter noted that while N. Old Woodward is not currently collecting revenue the City is still collecting occupancy counts.

12. Meeting Open For Matters Not On The Agenda

ACM Gunter said she requested that SP+ look into the costs of a circulator vehicle that would allow visitors to the downtown to park further out from the core area. She said preliminary cost estimates show that it would be a \$275-\$300 per day service. She said she did not yet have all the information about functionality, but that she hoped to be able to present that for the next APC meeting.

13. Next Meeting: April 8, 2020 @ 7:30 a.m.

14. Adjournment

No further business being evident, the meeting adjourned at 9:25 a.m.