



CITY OF CONCORD

New Hampshire's Main Street™

City Manager's Office

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Thomas J. Aspell, Jr.
City Manager

Parking Committee Minutes September 26, 2022

Attendees:

Brent Todd, City Councilor, Parking Committee Chair
Stacey Brown, City Councilor
Karen McNamara, City Councilor
Jim Bouley, Mayor

Staff:

David Florence, Parking Division Supervisor
Karen Hill, Transportation Engineer
Amanda Lombard, Fiscal Tech III, Parking Division
Matt Walsh, Interim Deputy City Manager - Development

Public:

Johnathan Powel
Ken Cox
Christopher Carr
Katie Katsikas
Heather Shank
Herbert Carpenter

The meeting was called to order by Councilor Todd at 5:01 PM.

- 1) **Overview of Agenda:** Councilor Todd welcomed members of the public to the meeting and provided an overview of the agenda.
- 2) **Adoption of Minutes:** Councilor McNamara moved to adopt the meeting minutes of August 22, 2022. Councilor Brown seconded the motion. The minutes were adopted unanimously.
- 3) **Citizen Requests and City Council Referrals:**
 - a. **Spruce Street (West to Allison):** Mr. Walsh provided an overview of the 2017 Narrow Street Study whereby the Parking Committee examined 143 street segments located to the north, west and south of the Downtown Central Business District. The project was initiated in response to growing resident concerns and complaints regarding a variety of parking issues. These included: difficulty accessing / egressing driveways, safe travel on narrow streets when snow banks are present and vehicles are parked, the City's ability to effectively and efficiently clear snow from narrow streets, as well as the ability for emergency service vehicles to safely and efficiently navigate narrow streets when vehicles are parked.

Spruce Street (Allison to West) was one of the 143 streets reviewed as part of the Narrow Streets Project.

The section of Spruce Street is 22' wide. In accordance with City standards and the Code of Ordinances, a low traffic street must be at least 20' wide in order to provide a 12' wide shared travel lane and 8' parking lane on one side of the road. In order to have parking on both sides of the road, the roadway must be at least 28' wide.

On August 30, 2021 and October 25, 2021, the Parking Committee held community meetings to discuss narrow street parking concerns in this neighborhood. Notices for both meetings were mailed to property owners. However, due to an administrative error, notices were not sent to property owners for this section of Spruce Street.

On December 13, 2021, the City Council passed Ordinance #3109, which restricted on-street parking for this section of Spruce Street to the east side of the road. The east side was selected, as it had more parking capacity (19 spaces on the east side vs. 15 spaces on the west side of the road).

The Ordinance was implemented by General Services in April 2022.

On April 28, 2022, Katie Katsikas and Christopher Carr, owners of property located at 18-20 Spruce Street, contacted the City with concerns regarding said parking changes. Specifically, Ms. Katsikas and Mr. Carr were utilizing parking spaces which were located in the City's rights-of-way to support their property. Said spaces became illegal parking due to the passage of Ordinance #3109.

In May 2022, Katie Katsikas's email was referred to the Parking Committee by the City Council for review. The Parking Committee had scheduled a neighborhood meeting to review this issue on June 27, 2022; however, the meeting was canceled due to a lack of quorum.

Notices for tonight's discussion were mailed to property owners on September 9th.

After a brief recap by staff, the Parking Committee opened a public hearing on recently implemented parking changes.

Public testimony was as follows:

- Jonathan Powel / Resident of 38 Spruce Street: Mr. Powel stated that he resides on the west side of Spruce Street, which is the side of the road where parking was removed. He stated that the east side of the road has curbing in some locations, and, therefore, it is not ideal for on-street parking, as vehicles cannot park off pavement. This phenomenon essentially makes the street narrower. Mr. Powel would like to have the parking restored to the east side of the street. When asked by Councilor Brown if he would support restoration of parking, but with the implementation of a winter parking ban on the street, Mr. Powel responded that said proposal would be an improvement over the current situation.

- Ken Cox / Resident of 17 Spruce Street: Mr. Cox informed the Committee that he has lived in his home for 20 years. He stated that he paid the City to have curbing put in and has never seen a fire truck struggle to get down the road. He would like to see less “no parking” signs on the street. He also stated that he supported the notion of a winter parking ban as long as the residents could still park on the street. Mr. Cox also requested that the City install a stop sign at the intersection of Spruce and Allison Street.
- Christopher Carr / Resident of 18 Spruce Street: Mr. Carr addressed his concerns with the Committee. He stated that on-street parking is more convenient on the west side of the road due to lack of curbing, even though there are fewer parking spaces available due to driveways and fire hydrants. He also spoke against the concept of a winter parking ban.
- Katie Katsikas / Resident of 18 Spruce Street: Ms. Katsikas stated that she is the partner of Mr. Carr. She followed-up on Mr. Carr’s comments. She stated her concerns about their tenants not being able to park in front of their property.
- Katie Cailler / Resident of 49 West Street and 14 Spruce Street: Ms. Cailler reported that she has resided at this property for seven years, and that the property has been in her family since the 1990s. She operates an automotive repair facility at the property. She explained that she parks vehicles on the grass portion of her property in the Spruce Street right-of-way. Ms. Cailler stated that she would prefer to have parking be permitted on the west side of the street. She also would like to see less “no parking” signage on the street, as she thinks it clutters the right-of-way.
- Heather Shank / Resident of 19 Spruce Street: Ms. Shank addressed the Parking Committee. Like previous speakers, she noted that curbing exists on portions of the easterly side of the road. Therefore, cars must park on pavement which narrows the travel way. She noted that no curb exists on the west side of the road. Therefore, cars may park on gravel shoulders, thereby providing additional room for vehicles to pass. She stated that she would like parking reverted back to both sides of the street. She also concurred with previous comments about sign clutter in the right-of-way.
- Herbert Carpenter / Resident of 37 Spruce Street: Mr. Carpenter stated that he was in favor of maintaining no parking on the west side of the street, as it makes it easier to back out of his driveway.

Motion: Mayor Bouley moved to recommend that the City Council repeal parking changes implemented by Ordinance #3109 on Spruce Street (West to Allison), and that on-street parking be restored to both sides of the road. Councilor Todd Seconded the motion. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

- b. YMCA Handicap Parking: Mr. Walsh reported that this issue was previously reviewed by the Parking Committee in March 2022, at the request of Susan Dow, a Pembroke resident who is a patron of the YMCA. The Parking Committee took no action during its March 2022 meeting. However, there was some discussion about potentially converting two metered spaces near 12 North State Street into handicap parking.

These spaces were suggested as they have been problematic for meter enforcement due to lack of proximity to a pay station kiosk. In addition, these spaces are located at the end of the block, and therefore would comply with United States Access Board US Acts standards for adding accessible parking spaces on roadways when no construction is being completed.

This item was resurrected due to impending pavement markings on North State Street associated with recent repaving by the City as part of Capital Improvement Program Project #78.

In accordance with the Parking Committee's instructions, a written notice was issued to all property owners near 12 North State Street.

Mr. Walsh reported that the notice generated conversations with the YMCA and Jeff Bart of the Granite State Candy Shop. Mr. Walsh reported that Mr. Bart questioned the need for additional handicap spaces in the area, given available supply at the State Street Parking Garage, as well as NH State Law, which permits any parker with a handicap placard or license plate to park at metered parking free of charge.

The Parking Committee opened a public hearing.

Alex Turcotte, Executive Director for the YMCA, was in attendance and stated he received the notification in the mail. He reported that some patrons feel that conveniently located accessible handicap parking spaces are needed for the YMCA. He stated that the YMCA does not believe that spaces located near 12 North State Street would be convenient for their patrons. Rather, he suggested that any accessible spaces be located along the frontage of the YMCA on Warren Street.

Discussion ensued. It was suggested that a space could be added in a bus stop near the YMCA on North State Street. Karen Hill, Transportation Engineer, reminded the Committee that any handicap spaces must be located near a crosswalk tip down at the end of a block to be compliant with US Access Board standards. The proposed space near the bus stop would not be compliant.

After additional review, it was the consensus of the Parking Committee to establish one accessible parking space on Warren Street, near North State Street, on the north side of the street along the frontage of the YMCA. David Florence, Parking Division Supervisor, reminded the Committee that Warren Street is a 10-hour metered parking zone. As such, there could potentially be no turnover for the space. Therefore, it was suggested that a 2-hour time zone could be established for the handicap parking space to encourage turnover. Alex Turcotte noted that programs at the YMCA are typically less than two hours.

Motion: Councilor Todd moved to recommend that the City Council amend the Code of Ordinances to convert one on-street metered parking space located on the north side of Warren Street, near North State Street, to a handicap accessible parking space with a 2-hour time limit. Councilor Brown seconded the motion. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

- 4) **Winter Parking Ban Citations and Tow Policy:** David Florence, Parking Supervisor, provided a report regarding the Police Department's Winter Parking Ban tow policy and citations.

Regarding the tow policy, he reported that the Police Department is currently exploring the possibility of updating the City's approach, whereby a single towing company would be awarded the contract to impound vehicles during winter parking bans. Under this new approach, vehicles would be towed to a central impound, likely staffed by the Police Department. This approach, which is used in Manchester, NH, may help reduce towing costs paid by vehicle owners. This concept remains under review and discussions with tow companies is ongoing. If an agreement between the City and a tow vendor could be reached, the Police Department anticipates that the new towing program could be implemented in November 2023.

Mr. Florence reviewed a memorandum which compared the City's current fee structure for winter parking citations with the communities of Manchester, NH; Portsmouth, NH; Hanover, NH; and Burlington, VT. Concord's winter parking ban citation is currently \$100, which doubles to \$200 after 10 business days and \$400 after 20 business days. Currently, vehicles in Concord that are towed during winter bans must pay the \$185 tow fee, as well as a parking citation.

Staff explained that the fine increases after 10 and 20 business days are common in the parking industry, and that said increases apply to all 34 of the City's parking citations with the exception of handicap parking violations (which are \$250). Staff suggested that the Parking Committee may want to explore a similar approach for winter parking citations as is currently used for handicap parking violations (i.e. keep the citation at \$100, but eliminate escalations after 10 / 20 business days).

Staff also noted that the Committee could explore a model whereby the winter parking ban ticket fee could be waived for vehicles which are towed and impounded during winter parking bans.

Discussion ensued. Members of the Parking Committee noted that effective and efficient snow removal is important for public safety, as well as to minimize expenses for taxpayers. As such, several members of the Committee expressed a desire to have a robust, but not draconian, winter parking ban fine structure to ensure parkers remove vehicles from City streets during winter parking bans.

The Committee discussed the City's approach to notify parkers of winter parking bans. The City's protocol includes notifications to local media outlets, posts on the City's website, as well as electronic notices to individuals that subscribe to the City's "notify me" list serve for parking bans. In addition, the General Services Department has historically mailed notices in the fall to property owners in congested neighborhoods to inform them of winter parking ban procedures. It was noted that the City does not use a beacon system like other communities (such as Manchester, NH, and Burlington, VT). However, a project to install beacons at several highly travelled intersections is proposed in the out years of the Capital Improvement Program.

Mr. Florence suggested that the Parking Division could create a warning ticket or sticker, which could be issued to all vehicles in particular neighborhoods sometime in November, during a non-parking ban time, to inform parkers in the high volume towing locations about winter parking bans. Said ticket would inform parkers that their vehicle could be towed if parked on-street overnight during bans, provide information about the cost of tickets and tows, as well as provide information on how to sign up through the City's website for the winter parking ban notifications.

Discussion ensued about the appropriate fine level for a winter parking ban. Some members of the Committee expressed a desire to remain at the \$100 level and eliminate escalations after 10 and 20 business days, while others wanted to reduce the cost of the citation. Some members of the Committee also expressed concerns about equity regarding citations waived for towed vehicles versus vehicles that are not towed.

Motion: Councilor Todd moved to recommend that the City Administration implement Mr. Florence's "warning ticket" concept. Councilor Brown seconded the motion. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Motion: Councilor Todd moved to recommend that the City Council amend the Code of Ordinances to reduce winter parking ban citation fines from \$100 to \$50, to terminate fine escalations for winter parking ban citations after 10 business days and 20 business days, as well as to waive the winter parking ban citation fine for any vehicle impounded during a winter parking ban. Councilor McNamara seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 3 to 1, with Councilor Brown opposed.

Following the votes, Mayor Bouley noted that vehicles illegally parked during winter parking bans frequently do not move for days after a storm event. He noted that said behavior violates the City's 48-hour time limit for occupying a parking space in non-time zone regulated areas, and greatly hinders cleanup of City streets after a winter storm event. He suggested that the Parking Committee explore changes to said ordinance and associated citation to help facilitate cleanup operations following winter storm events.

- 5) **Financials:** Due to shortness of time, the year to date FY 2023 financial statements through August 30, 2022 were not reviewed by the Committee.
- 6) **Other Business:** None.
- 7) **Future Meetings:**
 - a. **October 24, 2022 Meeting Agenda.** It was the consensus of the Parking Committee to hold a neighborhood meeting to discuss parking ordinance and signage inconsistencies identified during the Parking Committee's May 2, 2022 meeting for South Main Street (west to Langdon Avenue). Said discussion shall also include a review of requests from Feathered Friends Brewery that the City install parking meters and pavement markings in the vicinity of 231 South Main Street, as well as Sanel Auto Parts, for increased enforcement and additional 2-hour parking signs in the vicinity of 218 South Main Street.
- 8) **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amanda Lombard
Parking Division Fiscal Tech III