

# *Parking Committee*



## **MINUTES**

**April 21, 2021**

**Online Zoom Meeting at Noon**

**DRAFT**

**MEETING OPEN: 12:01 p.m.**

**ATTENDANCE:** Todd Stonesifer, Chris Hankins, Norman Ortiz, Diana Welch, Tom Smith, Councilman Gerald Roche, Jay Lazzieri, Codi Canasa, Councilman Fred Neil, Chris Raubaucher, Jay Lazzeri, Deb Grinstead, Steve Ottinger, City Manager Robertson, others.

**STAFF:** Tina Bradbury, Diane Laird

At 12:01 p.m., Todd Stonesifer, DDP Board President and Chair of the Parking and Safety Committee introduced himself, provided welcome and an introductory opening and a couple of ground rules for the meeting: We will follow the agenda. There will be room for public comment toward the end of the meeting. You will be invited to comment and when called on you will be given opportunity to make comments. Those comments should remain constructive and respectful, advising participating to listen with an open mind, take notes, and organize thoughts.

"I own two businesses in Downtown, I live downtown, and I prefer to play downtown. I actually started my real estate brokerage on the highway, but my vision was always to be based downtown. I have been here my entire life and have seen a thriving downtown and then a ghost town, and then what we have today. My goal is to see it thrive once again. I volunteer my time to make that happen.

"Parking. Do we have a problem? Will we have a problem in the future? What can we do about that?

"Currently - over half of the buildings are vacant in some state and have been for some time. Yet - we still hear the same complaints. "I don't want to go downtown because ... There is nowhere to park. You have to walk too far from where you park. I get tired of driving around the block, so I leave" Or something similar. Is that a problem?

"In the future - success means those vacant buildings are occupied. Occupancy means owners, employees, tenants, and patrons now will be, at a minimum, doubled from what they are now. However, no more parking spaces are available. In fact, we will have LESS parking than now due to the decrease in size of the Plaza parking lot. Is this going to be a problem?

"I say yes to both.

"What are our options?

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“Do nothing? Insanity - by definition is doing the same thing and expecting a different result. If we want a thriving downtown, this is not a viable option.

“Do something - but what? We do not know. The parking committee is a bunch of business and building owners and an enforcement officer. We do not know what to do. We decided to ask people that do know. We reached out nationwide in an official "request for information". We received 5 responses. Most of those responses were from app providers that assist in collection of money from parking. One was a much more comprehensive option presented to us by Colonial Parking. We chose to continue the conversation with Colonial Parking.

“We have had open discussions for months. Some concerns have been heard. We heard at our first meeting that no one supported meters. If you asked me if I supported meters, I would have said no as well. We were asked to have a more formal survey of stakeholders to help uncover thoughts and concerns. We have done that. We are going to look at those results in just a second. We have also heard many other concerns. We are going to hear our first proposal based on those survey results, and concerns which have been identified and hopefully addressed in some way.

“Before I turn the floor over for those results, I want to acknowledge Diana Welch for taking the lead in reaching out and helping bring light to those in opposition to the direction. She has been extremely respectful in her tactics and has attempted to bring the conversation back to parking when others wish to call names. Thank you, Diana.

“In a moment, I am going to turn the floor over to Chris Hankins with Colonial Parking.”

**Agenda:** Motion to approve by Councilman Neil, seconded by Todd Stonesifer; unanimously approved.

**March Minutes:** Motion to approve By Fred Neil, seconded by Chris Raubaucher; unanimously approved.

**Chris Hankins provided presentation of final survey results and preliminary parking management plan:** DDP conducted comprehensive throughout March, closed on March 31. Received 300 respondents. We will talk through it today and present results. Open-ended responses were also included into the overall presentation. Appreciation was expressed to those that responded to the 20-question survey. In March, a preliminary survey result presentation was made, and while some of the percentages changes, the overall theme of responses remained.

NOTE: The complete presentation may be viewed at: <http://tinyurl.com/DoverParkingSolutions>

### Outcome of survey:

1. Affiliation with downtown Dover: 29% Residents, 23% downtown workers, 21% non-resident visitors
2. Primary reasons to go downtown? 74 % shop, dine, and to attend special events.
3. What are one- or two ways typically get downtown. 82% by car (along or with others); several walkers. No one by taxi or “Uber” type vehicle.
4. How often do you park in downtown Dover? 63% at least a few times a month. Most others were parking in employer’s parking lot.
5. How have you typically found the parking experience to be in Dover? 58% either “less convenient than other areas but not bad for a downtown,” or “inconvenient and difficult to find parking.” 12

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% find parking to be “convenient and easy to find.” 16% a deterrent to coming downtown; 13% feel unsafe but come downtown anyway.

6. How far from desired destination are you willing to park? 81% 1- to 2 blocks away. 15% more than two blocks.
7. Where do you park when you are in Dover? Most on Lookerman Street, or side streets. Least used is S. Governor’s parking lot.
8. How long do you generally stay? 69% less than 2 hours
9. What do you see as your biggest parking challenges: 23% safety, 21% signage? 17% not enough parking
10. To business/property owners, what have constituents expressed about parking? Very similar results expressed in Question #9.
11. If safety concerns in Question 9, define your concerns: on panhandling, people nearby, poor lighting were top concerns.
12. If you are a business owner, and your constituents have expressed safety concerns, what are they? Similar to responses in Question 11 above.
13. If revenue generated from parking were to be inverted into addressing needs of downtown, what three areas of need could benefit most? Safety/police, courtesy ambas lighting, streetscape, incentives/promotions for business, more parking/parking garage.
14. If new management system were to improve parking, streetscape, safety and it included meters with a modest fee of \$1 or \$1.50, would it affect your decision to visit? 53% indicated “it will not affect their visits, or they are not sure” and 24% indicated it would limit their visits.
15. What would you like to see to improve parking in downtown Dover? 1. Improvements to pedestrian paths between parking and destination 2. Surface parking sites 3. Off-street parking garage
16. Rank in order what factors influence where you park: Guarantee to find a parking spot and cost were most important. Ease of paying was third.
17. 62% Percent of people strongly recommend that Downtown Dover needs a better system of parking.
18. 18 contact information which was not included in the presentation.
19. Same as above.
20. Final thoughts:
  - Concerns about safety/panhandling
  - Need or parking plan.
  - Change feel toward more pedestrian-friendly.
  - More businesses in downtown.
  - Also, responses repeatedly received about paid parking, and particularly about timing of discussion during pandemic; positivity and optimism about downtown going forward was also widely expressed.

### Other conclusions of survey:

- Goal is better place and a downtown that thrives.
- Limited space now; even with modest activity due to COVID>
- Parking will become even more scarce, must find a way to manage.
- Develop a comprehensive, more efficient system so that we are ready to implement when there is more certain that downtown Dover is on a path to growth and prosperity.

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- Continue the public participation into ongoing development of the plan.

### Parking Management Plan – preliminary

NOTE: View at: <http://tinyurl.com/DoverParkingSolutions> on April 21 presentation

- Proposed schedule is to continue planning development. Finalize plan in July and present to city council on/about August. Approximately two public meetings will be held in addition to the monthly DDP parking meetings (which are also public.)
- 263 on-street parking spaces to be included.
- 222 off-street parking spaces in lots.
- Additional spaces will be considered in the city hall parking lot.
- Proposed Hours of operation: Monday – Friday 10a.m. -6 p.m. Paid parking/enforcement will not in effect Saturday's, Sunday's, or holidays.
- \$.25 / 15 minutes, \$1 / hour with \$5 daily max; \$30 / month in lots; consideration to be given to some 60–90-minute free parking.
- On-Street parking management “ease of use” amenities proposed include pay by phone with kiosks to accept credit card, coin, app; integrated solar-powered.
- Off-street parking permits \$30 / month
- Amenities being considered: bike racks, electric vehicle charging stations.
- Graphics: wayfinding to parking and destinations; how to use parking (hours, rates, options, etc.)
- Promoting the program and inform the public. Under consideration: on-line reservations, handouts for merchants to inform customers, third party apps to find and reserve parking (Spot Hero, for instance)

Todd opened up for public comments. (Todd and Chris will continue to be available to answer questions and hear concerns today and throughout the process.)

- Jay Lazzeri attorney. Parking has not been an issue for the last year. Because of COVID perhaps people did not respond to parking. A colleague did respond. As a stakeholder, Mr. Lazzeri pays for parking permits. The concern that staff and customers have revolve around safety, panhandling, and not parking. Code Purple is a concern as his staff must walk past Code Purple constituents and are harassed. Some clients and constituents come in for a full day and not just 15 or 30 minutes. Every year, the law firm decides whether or not to stay downtown. Potential loss of business if paid parking program launched. Very much against paid parking.
- Diana Welch: To echo, safety is biggest concern. Over 600 responses to Diana's parking petition. Overwhelmed safety concerns were noted, especially at 2-3 a.m. when staff is leaving. Diana not entirely opposed to parking meters. More to learn. Her believe if that larger parking lots (Kunkel's, Bradford, Halper for three contiguous parking lots may be helpful to safety concerns. Maybe if meters were put in places around The Green or other more congested places could be considered. Noted a friend's comment in Detroit – that was in the parking garage: On the roof they located an amphitheater/bar, and the place was “popping” all the time. Consider when a parking structure is under consideration. Some issues are repeats. Does not believe there is a parking concern in Dover but consider background in DC and other urban areas. Kudos for considering bike and charging amenities. Parallel parking can be a concern. Combination of meters and permits in N. Street (will lose near term), S. Governor is not currently metered. Move

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Code Purple meeting lace. “699 responses to petition, all negative, possibly due to the way I worded survey.” Todd acknowledged Diana’s respectful handling of the petition.

- Todd indicated safety, parking, and building stock (Cost of retrofitting buildings) are the three concerns that people site for not investing downtown. We must address Parking program is to be developed today and implemented when we are more successful downtown. Todd has two businesses downtown, owns business and personal property. Agrees on safety concerns being present. Managing the destiny of parking allows revenues after covering costs of program, will be directed to needed areas such as safety, lighting, security, etc.
- Codi Canasa: Possible free off-street parking. Same for on-street? At this time, per presentation, free parking is not likely on-street, due to need for turnover, with exception of possibly some loading zones. What is projected timeframe for payback? Too soon to tell. With only a preliminary plan being discussed today, there are no projections yet. Likely budget projections can be made at next meeting. Acknowledged Codi’s input and participation at each meeting.
- Colonial projected a \$39,000 package to plan. Lockerman 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. for paid “active” metering fee is “beautiful” especially for residents and business owners who typically park after 6 p.m. and before 9 a.m. Weekends and holiday are also projected to still be free.
- Todd acknowledged Chris Raubacher’s participation: Five new stores will be open before end of year, there is a limited about of parking. There will be three or four more meetings to provide input.
- Jay indicated that his firm is generating \$3,000 a year for parking. He believes they will lose clients due to parking. It may sound trite, but elderly and people that do not wish to pay for parking. A decision will be made this fall as to whether his business will stay or leave downtown.
- Question was asked: Is there a plan in place with reference to safety? Councilman Neil responded: they are actively listening. Lighting is being installed now and has begun in downtown first. In terms of policing (\$200,000 per patrolman); five additional community policing offers are in training now. DDP has submitted a request for federal funding for master plan, to include safety as part of the proposed master plan. Goal is for business to prosper.
- Tom Smith: We all know safety is extremely important. As a member of the parking committee, we must do both: parking and safety. A long-term “plan” may not be motivational, they want to see safety be handled now. Paid parking will not be put in place tomorrow. People must realize that the days of free parking are over. When pandemic is over and people begin again to invest, we must be ready with a plan.
- Deb G. wanted clarification: Per presentation, only 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. on weekdays is being contemplated for enforcement, correct? Response: correct. Sat/Sun/holidays are not to be enforced – no cost for parking. Even with a vendor in place, DDP maintains control of parking fees and when they are charged. Deb would like to see paid parking on Saturdays because people park all day in one space. Real safety issues are a concern. Safety cannot wait. Per surveys, safety is always the number one issue.
- Steve Ottinger: Colonial may consider coupon codes, vouchers, pre-paid allotments as additional options and considerations, and Todd added the idea of being able to provide messages, wayfinding, etc. through apps.
- Tina mentioned need to look at A-Street. Solar portion of meters has been a concern with some current where there are trees. Parking meters, prior to COVID were being moved to trial via an app. Enforcement of parking meters will go back into effect on/about June 1. Safety: There is a

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Safety committee meeting planned for 6 p.m. Thursday April 22 at 6 p.m. at Cendel Building, with Dover PD on site. (Call office or email [Tina@DowntownDoverPartnership.com](mailto:Tina@DowntownDoverPartnership.com) to confirm attending.) Code Purple: S. Bradford is the new pick-up site at People's Church and is no longer at the library or outside city hall.

- Diana's final question: What happens if this negatively impact business owners? DDP Parking Committee will continue to vet this to the point where we are happy with it and implement. If we are not pleased with a workable solution, we will not move ahead. If moving ahead, Colonial will front the cost of infrastructure, originally projected to be paid over five years. DDP is incurring the cost and will "eat the cost" if it is proven that business is negatively affected. Todd indicated that a Parking Benefit District is being contemplated and some of those revenues could be to procure property for surface lots or seed funds for parking structure. All is under consideration.
- City Manager Robertson: Indicated that Captain Robbins is on the call to listen in who then offered the following: First, Captain Robbins expressed apology in attending last minute. Acknowledged safety concerns. At the beginning of June, the community policing unit will be up to full capacity. Individual problems can be addresses with Captain Robbins.
- Todd summarized that we heard negative comments and concerns about proposed paid parking and safety. We wish to address everything in our power. We will continue to tweak the proposal. We have worked hard to address the concerns we have heard.
- Codi indicated that she is very pleased with the process, as it has been and continues to be public, transparent, and with thoughtful consideration.
- Todd wrapped it up: When Todd was young, he used to drive to the beach. When Rt. 1 was put into place, people complained that they would not pay a dollar. And now people are paying \$10 for the convenience of traveling. People are willing to pay for convenience and do not wish to be frustrated by not being able to find a parking place. There is fear of the unknown. But it is sincerely believed that paid parking will not limit shoppers, but may, in fact, may actually increase shoppers to downtown. We will continue to seek comment and input for a balanced, reasonable solution.

Motion to adjourn Councilman Neil; Codi Canasa seconded; motion unanimously passed. 1:17 pm

DJL

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