

# *Parking Working Group Meeting*



## **MINUTES**

**February 17, 2021**

**Online Zoom Meeting at Noon**

**DRAFT**

**MEETING OPEN: 12:03 p.m.**

**ATTENDANCE:** Todd Stonesifer, Alan Grinsted, Jed Hatfield, Dave Huss, Tom Smith, Codi Canasa, Dave Hugg, Chris Hankins, Chris Raubaucher, Norman Ortiz, Joe Petrosky, Noel Rodriguez, Beau Zebley, Cameron Llewelyn, Officer Aviles, Steve Ottinger, Deb Grinstead, Councilman Ralph Taylor, Amanda (The News Journal), Tina Bradbury, Diane Laird

**STAFF:** Tina Bradbury, Diane Laird

**PRESENTER:** Steve Mulheim

**Agenda and Meeting Minutes (January 2021 meeting):** Motion by Dave Hugg, seconded by Tom Smith; motion approved unanimously.

### **Brief updates:**

Current Parking Process/Development of Comprehensive Parking Solution Diane explained that there has been significant progress over the last several months. Consistent communication with many merchants and property owners, as well as parking updates on the Downtown Dover website, after every meeting. A survey to merchants is being planned, which will also invite broader public input. Anticipated to go out in about two weeks. Meetings are held once a month (the third Wednesday of every month at noon.) Diana Welsh wrote a letter with questions and concerns (reviewed later on in the meeting). Tina added that there is still an issue with people parking on the streets. Especially when there is snow, since the roads need to be plowed.

### **Welcome Guest Speaker, Steve Mulheim, Executive Director, Old Pasadena:**

Todd explained that Old Pasadena has implemented parking meters, has created a "Parking Benefits District", and has seen much success as a result. The Parking Benefits District (PBD) controls the revenue that comes in and is able to spend that money on the areas in which revenues are collected. Todd shared that they have heard some concerns that Old Pasadena and Dover are not comparable.

Steve explained that, when starting out, parking meters were a major debate for Old Pasadena stakeholders. They discovered, after the installation of parking meters, that people enjoyed the additional ease of parking when there were more spaces available. Previous to meters, there had been an issue with

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## ***Parking Working Group Meeting***

street space being taken up by store owners and store employees, so they were not seeing a turnover for those spaces.

The turning point of their decision was the proposal that meter revenue would stay in the district: It would not go into the City's General Fund, but rather it would be used for streetscapes projects, beautifying the area, and creating a nicer space for the merchants.

A year after the installation, the City worked with the organization that existed at the time to take bond funds out. There was a two-million-dollar bond fund, drawn against any future revenue within the parking meter district that was put into a streetscapes plan. People started pretty quickly seeing the payback of putting meters in: Improved aesthetics of the area, a great deal of turn over in the parking on the streets, and conversations about how much easier the meters made it for people to find parking.

They started with parking meters on the main strip, and later expanded it to the full district. Pre-COVID-19, Old Pasadena businesses generated an average of \$350 million from sales. When the net parking revenue after the expenses of managing the meters is taken out, it is somewhere around \$1.8 - 2 million that goes annually into streetscapes projects and other expenses for the bid.

### **Discussion:**

Todd asked what Steve's experience was with regard to safety when the parking meters were discussed and implemented:

Steve responded that Old Pasadena looked at the perception of safety vs. the reality of safety. They were actually seeing far less incidents downtown than they were seeing in the city as a whole and in neighboring downtowns. With more pedestrians at the curbs and the streetscape projects, a more pleasant environment was created. This helped bridge the perception of safety to what was happening: perception was worse than reality.

Todd asked what the hours of the meters were: (i.e., Hours in which customers paid at the meters)

Steve responded that the times morphed, responding to the particular needs. They start at 11:00 a.m., which gives a lot of shop owners a couple of hours in the morning to pull up and make deliveries, if they need to get things out of their store, to go to the post office, and such. Gave residents the chances for a little bit of time as well. The end time has changed a lot from over the years relating to the changes in the downtown. It started with 9 p.m., then to 11p.m., and now it is at 2 a.m.

Jed asked if Steve could compare Old Pasadena (OP) to Dover, DE, and what the median income in OP is:

Steve responded that the median incomes depend on where you look in OP: Some are tipping seven figures while others barely break fifty thousand. They are drawing from a regional audience, which explains the inability to provide exact median income data. Old Pasadena has seen a wide range of consumer income levels.

Steve Ottinger asked what the Pasadena transit has done for their city (more broadly, considering transportation in the larger sense) compared to just trying to move people in and out.

Steve responded that they partner pretty consistently with the city on a lot of the projects. Their city municipality is very accessible. There is a lot both through traffic and destination traffic, making the focus

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## ***Parking Working Group Meeting***

“getting through” as well as being able to “get to places in Old Pasadena.” Old Pasadena works closely with transit on quite a number of projects. They are constantly focusing on how to better the city, traffic-wise.

Deb Grinstead asked how Old Pasadena worked through the perception of the crime not being as bad as what people perceived it to be in Old Pasadena.

Steve responded that Old Pasadena’s police provided reports based on the area of the city, what the incidents were and how many occurred. Comparing these reports to the previous years with the crime rates of neighboring cities helped considerably to recognize the improvements going on in the city. He encouraged the use of social media to encourage people to interact by way of positive conversations about the downtown.

Codi Canasa asked if Old Pasadena offered any free time (to allow merchants to service their customers in an expedited kind of situation) and how to increase traffic into businesses.

Steve responded that the “open” free time in the morning that began at 11 a.m. was a major help to allowing the merchants to have free parking time to service their customers. They also provided free parking time on Holidays. Even though Holidays are extremely busy times, the meters are free, but when there are large events, the meter “paid time” remains as normal. Old Pasadena now perceives parking as an amenity to what the stores need. The law enforcement officers have a system that recognizes license plates to determine if it is a first-time parking violation, and rather than issue a ticket, they would print a friendly warning with a coupon on the back of the paper to give a good last impression on the consumer to want to return later. They also have (paid) parking ambassadors walking around to be readily available to provide help with any questions or concerns about the parking meters. These ambassadors also provide inspection services for the city.

Diane asked Steve if they used a “phased-in” approach when they started years ago (I.e., Did they do a portion of parking at a time) and asked Steve if he could provide more information about the comprehensive nature of his program.

Steve responded that they first installed meters on approximately four blocks of their main boulevard, and as the district grew, they added more. Now it is the full twenty-two blocks. They also incorporated parking garages and a program of “first 90 minutes – free parking.” The meter timing/price and the garage timing/price were devised to work together. In the beginning, they placed stickers on the meters that said that by using the meters, they would be supporting the businesses downtown. It is important to recognize the difference between parking revenue and the parking enforcement revenue. The parking meter revenue of Old Pasadena would go to the Old Pasadena Parking Commission, which funds the specific business district projects. The parking enforcement revenue goes to the general fund of the City.

Tom Smith asked about the parking ambassadors on the streets (are these people the eyes and ears of the street and if they are paid by the revenue from the parking.)

Steve responded that the parking ambassadors are the eyes and ears on the streets, they write property and safety reports, provide customer service, and pretty much anything anyone needs. They are paid through the PBid. Old Pasadena is a property-based improvement district, meaning that each property votes every few years to continue paying a property tax assessment, which goes into the funds of the organization. And with these funds they pay for higher levels of cleaning, ambassador, and events. Old

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## ***Parking Working Group Meeting***

Pasadena started off with about four ambassadors, and now are about 27-28. They have mainly utilized parking funds generated to help fund streetscape and beautification projects.

Alan Grinstead asked if there is any type of permit parking for residents and business owners.

Steve responded that they do not have permit parking on the street, but they do have parking garages available and overnight permits are available in other parts of the city. They have a number of delivery zones all over the city- for loading and unloading purposes.

Codi asked what provided the biggest return on investment.

Steve responded that keeping the money within the districts for improvement.

**Other Business:** Diane Laird responded to a letter from Diana Welsh. Ms. Welsh suggested that she would like to see a survey go out: A survey will go out. She asked if it is possible to put in test meters to see how they work: Diane Laird advised that a phased approach may be a direction for Dover and suggested discussing it in further conversations. Diana asked about how long it will take to pay back the cost of putting in the parking meters and any other parking equipment required: If the program is phased in, the cost will be less than if it is implemented all at once. However, if the program is phased it will also generate less revenue than full implementation. Therefore, a phased approach may have a longer period to pay back the cost of the equipment. Diana asked about the residents and how they will fare in the system: There have not been any decisions, but there has been discussion about continuing to offer free parking overnight. There be both coin options and smart technology apps.

Diane Laird explained that Old Pasadena is not necessarily comparable to Dover, in size and population, but the concept of a Parking Benefit District where funds go back into the downtown for the benefit of the downtown is the idea that is transferable. Diana expressed that she is concerned about safety issues - both perception and actuality: We cannot look at parking without looking at safety. This will be addressed with some of the revenue from the meters, but also in concert with the City of Dover Police Department and their Community Policing Unit. We need to remember that the CPU is not just in dedication to the downtown but rather polices throughout Dover.

Of note: There is a desire for the City of Dover Police to have a second police academy, which will require Council approval to budget funds for it- for further discussion at Monday's Council Meeting. This would fund the full amounts of officers, up to about 108, in the city. This will support a full CPU of ten.

Jed spoke on the Association of Realtors comments in Diana's letter, relative to the payback on investment. Colonial had developed a couple of financial models of what it looks like based on the full footprint and based on the footprint of Lockerman Street, but it will need to be fine-tuned before they can share it publicly. Depending on how big the footprint is, the system will be funded in a five- to six-year window. During this time period, the expectation is that there would be some net proceeds still coming to the partnership that could be reinvested. The numbers will depend on the size of the footprint. He believes that there will still be some revenue, but as they answer some more of the questions and move further down the path towards the development of the program, we will be in a better position to project how the revenues will look.

Beau Zebley commented on Diana's letter as well. Kent County Association of Realtors (KCAR) and Delaware Association of Realtors (DAR) have a position of "no position" with regard to parking meters.

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## ***Parking Working Group Meeting***

Personally, he is in favor and believes that the parking meters will free up space and allow merchants to get even more opportunities.

### **Public Comments:**

Cameron Llewelyn discussed that those who shop are already willing to buy more costly meals and items, and they will not be worried about spending a dollar more for parking. He also commented that when merchants abuse the free parking spaces, they are taking up customer space. They could park in one of the parking lots. He is in favor of having parking meters.

Diane commented that downtown is a limited, unique space and we are creating experiences for people. There is a reason to want to be in Downtown, there is value in coming to Downtown to experience the unique family-owned shops. People will pay for an experience that is a good one.

Deb expressed that she is in favor of the parking meters and that it is only beneficial. She explained that we need to get to work on developing downtown, so that we can get more people and make it a place where people with higher incomes want to visit and spend more money than just a couple of dollars. She hopes that by raising money with the parking, they could do things like this. (Reinvest revenues into addressing downtown needs.)

Chris Raubaucher added that he thinks that it is important that they come up with a comprehensive parking plan. He addressed the multiple comments on the turnover of the spaces out front, that we need to keep in mind that X amount of dollars needs to be generated. He suggested having a space or two that is "twenty-minute free parking all the time" and a few spaces that are thirty minutes pay (this would mean that it is only thirty minutes pay, one cannot keep recycling their credit card and keep the spot tied up). If we do this to two or four spaces this would keep the turnover for the stores. He emphasized that it is very important to come up with a comprehensive plan for parking in Dover.

Codi expressed that it is important to recognize that the first priority is genuinely the merchants and the people that live here.

Noel said that they support the idea of the parking meters and believes it is a great idea to help the flow of getting people to downtown.

Tom thinks parking meters are an overall good idea and he added that it is important to continue the planning process and launch it when it is time to launch it, and not keep talking about it.

Jed added that it is not only about parking, but also about transits and the connectivity of downtown Dover, as Steve Mulheim discussed. There are other parking assets that are not right on Loockerman or within the block of Loockerman, that could be unleashed. With the right transit solution, can make downtown Dover more productive and work better from a transportation mobility perspective.

Tina responded to Chris Raubaucher and provided feedback for Jed. She discussed two different times that they used quick parking and had successful results. She first explained that, for the past several summers, they had taken four to five spaces in front of the Loockerman Plaza and converted them into temporary parking for 15 to 20 minutes. They used these spaces for people to come and pick-up produce or something really quick and then get back in their cars. She explained that this worked well, especially for young moms who wanted to run in and grab something but did not want to be parking and lugging a

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## ***Parking Working Group Meeting***

stroller out. Then, she explained that they have used the space along Minor St. alley for a 15-minute loading and unloading space.

Steve added to Jed's point by saying that transit is not the only solution. It is not just the busses, but there is more to it, such as whether it is a block party or organizing a barrier in a certain area. It is important to make sure people are comfortable with coming downtown and coming back. He believes that it will help with the long-term effects and trying to get people comfortable with coming downtown.

**Adjournment 1:19 p.m.:** Motion duly made and unanimously approved.

SH/DJL

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