



## CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

### AGENDA

#### AUTOMOBILE PARKING COMMISSION

July 9, 2009

8:00 AM

- I. Review and Approval of June 11, 2009 Minutes
- II. *Action Item* - Request for Removal of Parking Meters (Attachment)
- III. *Action Item* – Pay by Cell Phone (Attachment)
- IV. Other Business
- V. Public Comment
- VI. Adjournment

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Parking Services will support economic development and growth of the central downtown and neighborhood business districts by providing sufficient, well-maintained, and customer focused parking options.

*Please notify us (456-3290) by noon Wednesday if you are unable to attend.*

## **AUTOMOBILE PARKING COMMISSION MINUTES**

**June 11, 2009**

**Call to Order:** Chairperson Haynes called the meeting to order at 8:00 am.

### **Attendance:**

**Members Present:** Lisa Haynes (Chairperson), Commissioner Lumpkins, Monica Sekulich, Gerald Schildroth, David Leonard, John Tully, Mike Ellis, Dwayne Moore, and Joan Rosema-David.

**Members Absent:** None

**City Staff Present:** Pam Ritsema, Kim Miller, Henry Bouman, Barb Singleton, Mitch Schutter, Jay Fowler

**Visitors Present:** Dave Czurak (Grand Rapids Business Journal), Kevin Wissenlink (ITP- Rapid), Steve Bowyer (Gilmore Collection), Chris Brigman (Cooley Law School), Dan Helmer (Cooley Law Student), Judy Bennett, (resident of 921 Fulton SE), Larry Bennett (resident of 921 Fulton SE), Michael Scruggs (resident of 921 Fulton SE), and Sheppie Jefferies (with 921 Fulton SE residents)

### **I. Review and Approval of May 14, 2009 Minutes:**

**Mr. Tully moved for the approval of the Minutes of May 14, 2009 and Commissioner Lumpkins supported. Motion carried unanimously.**

### **II. Request for Removal of Parking Meters:**

Director Ritsema reported that Parking Services received a request from the residents of 921 Fulton SE to remove seven parking meters in front of and adjacent to the residential apartment building. The building is owned by Lighthouse Communities and is leased to residential tenants. There are seven units ranging from studio to 3 bedroom apartments. There are businesses on both sides of the residential building. The meters begin directly in front of the residential building. Vandine Ave SE is the street to the west and is very narrow and offers no on-street parking. The businesses on both sides of the apartment building each have sufficient off-street parking available to their customers and employees. There is a parking lot designated for the tenants at the apartment building one block away at Custer Ave SE and Fulton St SE. Director Ritsema explained that she drove through the area several times to evaluate the parking situation. An email was sent business association asking their opinion on the matter and the correspondences have been included in the packet. The businesses are not in favor of removing the parking meters. Parking staff recommendation is to remove only the two parking meters directly in front of the residential unit instead of removing all the seven requested.

Mr. Tully asked how many years the meters have been at that location.

Director Ritsema replied that they have been there many years.

Ms. Sekulich asked if there would be any signage put up to hold these parking spaces for the tenants of the apartment building.

Director Ritsema replied that the spaces would be open parking available for use by anyone.

Mr. Leonard added that the parking at the metered spaces is free overnight.

Director Ritsema replied that the tenants are unhappy with having to get up and put money in the meter at 8:30 am.

Mr. Michael Scruggs addressed the Parking Commission and expressed his thanks for considering his request. Mr. Scruggs explained that he feels this is a reasonable request given the traffic on Fulton and the uncertainty with construction in the area. He further explained that only the tenants of the apartment complex use the parking spaces now. He expressed that the meters do not generate any revenue for the City since the tenants are the ones using them. The residents watch out for each other and deposit money if the neighbors' time has elapsed. The parking spaces are not helping the businesses anyway since only the tenants are using them. Mr. Scruggs asked if anyone wants to walk a block to park their car. The situation is not safe and there are those with medical issues that cannot make the one block walk. Mr. Scruggs explained that the two spaces proposed are not acceptable. The City needs to be good neighbors. Mr. Scruggs added that he would like three or four additional spaces on the south side of the street made open parking. He explained that Mr. Larry Bennett has already accumulated over 30 parking tickets this year alone. Mr. Scruggs thanked the Commission for the time to speak.

Chairperson Haynes asked if there questions or comments regarding the matter. She then asked for additional information about the off-street parking of the local businesses.

Director Ritsema explained that the businesses in the area have off-street parking available. The businesses on either side both have parking areas.

Mr. Scruggs asked how much revenue is brought in by the meters.

Director Ritsema replied that she is unsure how much is generated annually from the meters but given that the fee is 25 cents per hour, it is relatively small.

Mr. Ellis asked if there are restrictions for how long a vehicle can be parked at a parking space.

Director Ritsema explained that after 48 hours the vehicle is ticketable.

Mr. Tully asked if there have been requests of this nature from others. Have the downtown area condos asked for similar concessions?

Director Ritsema replied that there have not been similar requests to this point.

Mr. Leonard expressed that if there are residents in the building with legitimate health issues and handicaps, perhaps there should be consideration of creating a handicapped space.

Director Ritsema replied that a sticker would be required to park in the space if it is designated as handicapped.

Mr. Scruggs interjected saying that there is no one handicapped in the building but it is an inconvenience to everyone in the building to walk the one block to the off street parking area.

Mr. Larry Bennett stated that he is handicapped.

Mr. Leonard added that the parking spaces and meters are there to support the local businesses. He would hesitate at hindering local businesses even further in this difficult economic time. These spaces provide close and convenient parking for the businesses. Parking is always difficult in a business district. The question was raised of why a one block walk is too far if there is no disability.

Mr. Scruggs explained that there are seven apartments with an average of two cars per apartment. The inconvenience of parking makes it hard on the residents. Mr. Scruggs expressed that he wants to see the local businesses succeed but he also wants to enjoy his home and have a good night's rest.

Director Ritsema suggested that she will go back to the adjacent businesses and discuss the possibility of removing just the two meters directly in front of the apartment.

Mr. Tully suggested that perhaps the hours of the meters could be adjusted to better serve the residents. If most of the businesses do not open until 10am, perhaps the meters could be started at that time. The tenants would be able to sleep in longer and the businesses would still have a full compliment of parking during their business hours.

Mr. Scruggs interjected that he wants to get something. He came down and wants to have some action now.

Mr. Ellis asked about the off-street parking available to the tenants.

Director Ritsema explained that it is between Custer Ave SE and Batavia Ave SE at Fulton.

Mr. Ellis suggested that the tenants speak with the local businesses about leasing some of the off-street parking during non business hours to help with overnight parking.

Mr. Scruggs replied that the biggest issue is during the daytime. There have been discussions with the local businesses and the situation is deemed a liability for the businesses due to prior events of vandalism.

Chairperson Haynes asked if there were any additional questions. Director Ritsema will contact the local businesses and discuss the removal of the two spaces directly in front of the apartment.

Mr. Moore added that he owns a rental dwelling in the area and he lived in the area for a number of years. He expressed that he has seen the situation first hand over the seven years he lived in the area. Daytime parking is a big issue in the surrounding community.

Commissioner Lumpkins suggested tabling the discussion for a month to allow Director Ritsema time to speak with the surrounding businesses about the idea of removing the two parking meters directly in front of the apartment building.

Director Ritsema agreed to speak with the businesses about the situation.

Chairperson Haynes introduced the new Parking Commissioner, Ms. Joan Rosema-David to the Parking Commission.

Ms. Rosema-David introduced herself and expressed that she looks forward to serving on the Automobile Parking Commission.

### **III. Monroe Place Parking Lot Agreement:**

Director Ritsema reported that there are two options available for consideration regarding the 20 Monroe Building parking lot agreement. The decision will need to be one of the following two choices. The first option is an Operation and Maintenance agreement for the parking lot. The other choice is a Lease, License, and Termination Agreement in which 20 Monroe would lease the equipment in the parking lot.

The City has entered into a Development Agreement with 20 Monroe Building in which the City will sell the parking lot and 20 Monroe Building will develop the site. There is not a requirement to begin construction until October 1, 2011. Previously proposed was an Operation and Maintenance Agreement in which the City would operate the parking lot, maintain the lot, do the landscaping, snow plowing, and security as though it was a City owned and operated building. The issue was raised in May whether the City should be in the business of operating privately owned parking. Director Ritsema submitted that this is a different circumstance in that the Development Agreement includes the right for the City to repurchase the lot if 20 Monroe fails to meet development criteria. If all building permits are not arranged by February 1, 2011 or if construction has not begun by October 1, 2011; the City can repurchase the property. This is not a situation where the

City is going out and soliciting Operation and Maintenance Agreements from privately owned parking structures.

As an alternative, a Lease, License, and Termination Agreement has been developed which is included in draft form in the package. Under the agreement, 20 Monroe would lease the equipment on the site, including Parking Access Revenue Control Equipment, the light poles, a bike rack, and all signage. 20 Monroe would be responsible to provide the electric service. All operation and maintenance of the equipment will be provided by 20 Monroe alone. The City has no risk of loss for the equipment. The equipment will be returned to the City in the same condition (minus normal wear and tear) at the end of the lease term. 20 Monroe will also set their own parking rates and control the monthly visitor allocation. The City will maintain only the card access software since it is directed to Parking Services at this time. The majority of the tenancy for the lot is from the 50 Monroe Building. Most of that tenancy is stable with very few starts or stops in card activity. The B.O.B. occasionally displaces card holders during events. The City agrees to allow access to those displaced to the 80 Ottawa ramp. The full day rate will be charged back to 20 Monroe in those cases.

Chairperson Haynes asked if the card holders from 50 Monroe are aware of the situation.

Director Ritsema replied that Greg Gilmore met with Sam Cummings last week regarding the matter. She also reported that the existing evening agreement the City has with the B.O.B. will be cancelled.

Chairperson Haynes asked if the recommendation from Director Ritsema is to proceed with the Lease, License, and Termination agreement.

Director Ritsema agreed that is her recommendation and Greg Gilmore is also in favor of the Leasing agreement.

Mr. Tully asked about a six foot wide section of land referred to in the agreement.

Director Ritsema explained that there is a very small piece of property on which some parking meters sit. In order to make a straight line, the small piece is to be acquired. In the mean time, City parking meters will encroach on that small piece of land. The entrance and exit lanes for the ramp are on City owned property. The license agreement will allow use of the properties by 20 Monroe and the City.

Ms. Sekulich asked if the plan is to remove the leased equipment after the lease is up. Can the equipment be reused by the City?

Director Ritsema replied that some of the equipment can be reused and other items cannot. Equipment such as the cash registers is quite old and would not be reused. To the extent that the City can, the equipment will be reused. Perhaps some may be used for parts for other equipment.

Ms. Sekulich asked if there is any chance that the equipment might be sold to 20 Monroe instead. Some of the items may be more costly to remove than they are worth.

Mr. Mitch Schutter replied that most everything can be reused.

Mr. Schildroth asked how much it would cost to repurchase all of the equipment in question if it were new.

Director Ritsema speculated that it would cost around \$60,000.

Mr. Leonard stated that he feels this arrangement seems more appropriate, even though it is a unique situation. This seems like a more correct role for the government.

Director Ritsema replied that she did request assistance from the City Attorney's Office regarding the question of the City operation of private property. She has not yet received a response.

Mr. Leonard suggested that this is a better business practice.

Chairperson Haynes expressed that she would be interested in the City Attorney's response to whether this is a moral or philosophical issue. This is a complex, negotiated deal that does not represent a traditional transaction.

**Mr. Tully Moved to support the recommendation of Director Ritsema and to adopt the Lease, License, and Termination Agreement. Motion supported by Mr. Leonard. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### **IV. Project Updates:**

Director Ritsema reported that the Irish Twins project at Ionia/Mason required an \$80,000 Letter of Credit to be submitted to the City of Grand Rapids by June 1, 2009. That Letter of Credit has been received and there has been a meeting between the City and the developer to discuss a timeline for completion. The City will begin environmental and parking lot design is to be discussed with Walker Parking Consultants. There will be demolition of a very small portion of the building.

Mr. Schutter reported that there is a glass wall that needs to be removed. The large elevation change will require a retaining wall as well.

Director Ritsema added that closing should happen right around September 1, 2009. There will be approximately 10 weeks to lay the asphalt.

The project at Weston/Commerce is moving along well despite precast quality issues. Pioneer Construction is working on the situation and they are not far behind schedule. The City is looking for established technology and is not considering LED lighting at this

point. Florescent lighting is the most likely choice and the information gleaned during this process will also be used to determine the course of action for the Gallery at Fulton.

Mr. Ellis explained that the Midtown ramp has the new florescent lights and they have great capabilities.

Director Ritsema explained that the fixtures have three bulbs and they can be controlled and adjusted wirelessly. Lights can be dimmed by turning off one or two of the lights at a time. There is also motion detection capability that allow for lights to turn on or turn up their brightness as cars approach. Individual fixtures can be programmed separately to further define the desired look or decrease energy consumption.

Mr. Schutter added that it is better light quality with less energy consumption.

Chairperson Haynes asked how the cost compares to traditional lighting.

Mr. Schutter replied that a high pressure sodium light system is cheaper. There is about a four year payback on the florescent lighting system.

Director Ritsema added that the supplier is a local, Holland based, company that will work hard to make everything function correctly for the City. There is also a very good warranty on the product.

Mr. Schutter added that the bulbs are under warranty as well.

#### **V. Other Business:**

Director Ritsema reported there are no updates on the Pay-by-Cell-Phone program discussed in May. An agreement is being worked on with Parkmobile. There should be more information in July.

#### **VI. Public Comment:**

Mr. Chris Bergman introduced himself as a Cooley Law Student and expressed that he would be attending more of the upcoming meeting.

#### **VII. Adjournment:**

The June 16, 2009 Meeting of the Automobile Parking Commission was adjourned at 8:45 am.

# MEMORANDUM

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

DATE: July 6, 2009

TO: Parking Commission

FROM: Pam Ritsema *P. Ritsema*  
Parking System Director

**SUBJECT: Request for Removal of Certain Parking Meters on Fulton**

After the last Parking Commission meeting I communicated with the Business Association and with the adjacent neighbors of 921 Fulton regarding the removal of only two parking meters in front of 921 Fulton. Neither the Business Association nor the business neighbors are in favor of removal of two parking meters. The primary reason cited is even though businesses may have off-street parking available to them, the majority of the customers prefer to park on the street as close to the front door as possible. Customers may also walk to other stores in the area, and therefore wish to park on street vs. an off-street private lot.

Mr. Scruggs submitted a Freedom of Information Act request (attached) regarding the amount of revenue collected in the in each of the seven meters in the last six months. We forwarded the request and the information to the City Attorney's office, which provided it to Mr. Scruggs. We do not track revenue by meter, only by collection route. In the months from January through May 2009, monthly collections for the 107 meters in the collection route ranged from \$1,034 to \$2,142.

Representatives of both the residents and the business association plan on attending the Parking Commission meeting.

Michael B. Scruggs  
921 Fulton SE Apt. 6  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
(616) 706-9200

RECEIVED

JUN 22 2009

Parking Services

June 17, 2009

Pam Ritsema, Director  
Parking Commission  
50 Ottawa NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

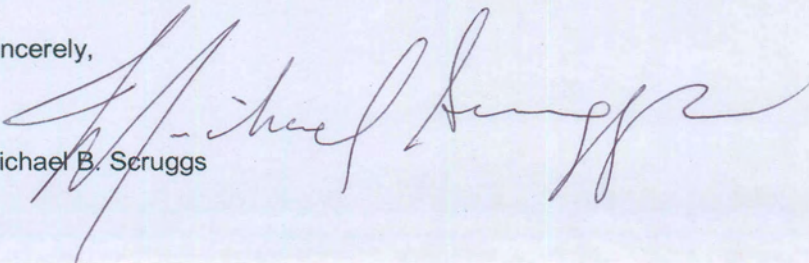
RE: Parking Meter Removal

Dear Ms. Ritsema,

I asked for the removal of parking meters number 6539, 6540, 6541 in zone 09 on the north side of the street, and parking meters number 6501, 6502, 6503, 6504 zone 09 on the south side of the street. If you can provide to me under the Freedom of Information Act, the amount of monies that were collected from each of these meters in the last six months would be a huge help.

My aim is to show the Parking Commission that these meters location and the funds that are generated by them do not affect parking availability. A timely response would be appreciated.

Sincerely,


  
Michael B. Scruggs

# MEMORANDUM

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

DATE: July 6, 2009

TO: Parking Commission

FROM: Pam Ritsema   
Parking System Director

**SUBJECT: Pay by Cell Phone Pilot Agreement**

Parking staff has continued investigating the option of a pay by cell phone (PbP) pilot program for the City. We have been negotiating a pilot agreement with ParkMobile. ParkMobile is the largest provider in Europe, and is rapidly expanding into the United States.

We have agreed to major components of a pilot agreement, however there are still some issues to be negotiated to our satisfaction, including liability, indemnification, insurance and termination. We will be meeting with Dick Wendt this week to continue work on a project plan agreement.

The major components as proposed include:

ParkMobile will at no charge to the City:

- Provide all web-hosted back end processing software
- Provide a toll free number to call to start & stop parking
- Provide 24/7 help for PbP customers and to the City
- Provide the necessary hand-held units for enforcement and coordinate installation with current Clancy enforcement system (*during pilot only*)
- Assist with design of stickers to be placed on every meter
- Provide an internet site where a customer can view their PbP account and parking transactions
- Survey PbP customers and share the results with the City of Grand Rapids
- Provide the City with real time access to parking transactions for ticket dispute resolution
- Provide marketing for PbP
- No transaction fee to the customer for the first three months, thereafter .35 per transaction. There is an option for monthly fee membership of \$1.75. Members get a lower transaction fee and referral credits for referring new members credited after the new member's first use.

The City will:

- Purchase and affix PbP signage on all parking meters (*estimated cost \$3,000*)
- Provide ParkMobile with a list of meter numbers and the rate / time combination (*completed*)
- Pay credit card transaction fees (*cost not yet determined*)
- Pay enforcement cell phone charges (*data connection \$40 per month per unit*)

To be determined:

- Cost and implementation of off-street options using license plate recognition (LPR) to allow entrance / exit (*estimated cost \$5,000 per camera + data connection fee*)
- Duration of pilot (*ParkMobile has requested a 1 year pilot – City would like earlier termination options of 90 days and 120 days*)

There are two major policy questions that need to be answered by the Parking Commission:

1. Should we offer a discount for PbP transactions similar to SAM (30% discount)?
2. Should we allow customers to add additional time beyond the stated meter time limit?

Joan Rosema David sent me an email with several questions regarding the pilot program (attached.) I have forwarded the questions to ParkMobile and expect to have their response prior to the meeting. Some questions may not be fully answered except through a pilot program.

Because we still need to complete an agreement and because we have some unanswered questions, staff recommendation is that we continue to negotiate a pay by cell phone pilot program agreement and return to Parking Commission when the agreement is completed to staff satisfaction.

Below are some questions and thoughts about the Parkmobile Pay by phone system from Joan Rosema-David.

1. Currently, city parking employees who check meters walk along sidewalks or drive in the small vehicles to check meters. It is very easy for them to determine if a meter is expired by a visual look. If the meter is expired, they can then check for the In Car Meter Program unit, and if none is visible, give the violator a ticket. However, with a pay by phone system, the city employee will have additional steps to check every car that is parked at an expired meter unless there is a visible system on the dashboard similar to the city's In Car Meter Program unit. First-time users and occasional users will not have a unit even if one is available from Parkmobile. Has a study been done to determine the potential additional costs associated with this change at a time when the city is trying to reduce costs? Is there enough of a customer advantage to justify these additional costs or do we expect increased usage due the change in system?
2. Some examples of additional costs include:
  - a. Additional labor cost. It will take at least double the time to check a computerized system as it would a visual check of an expired meter. This means we'll either need more meter checkers or we'll have less enforcement.
  - b. What additional equipment will be needed to check the vehicles through the service? For example, will every meter reader need to have a hand held computer of some sort? How much will those cost? Will this increase a subscription cost such as for the phones to connect to the Internet? Will there be any issues with replacement or damage of this equipment? What will the weight of the equipment be that they will have to carry around? Is that an issue?
  - c. Does the person who handles fine payments at the city have time to handle complaints from users that they paid through this system, but something didn't go through or wasn't done right, and the ticket may be cancelled? This will take time and effort between Parkmobile, the city, and the customer.
  - d. Customer cost - When customers at the meter pay using this method, is the phone number a normal number meaning no extra charges for the customer, or is there an additional fee?
  - e. Customer cost - Is there a cost for a receipt from this service to the customer? If so, why would there be a charge for their proof of payment?
3. Does this compete with the In Car Meter program? What need does it serve that the In Car Meter (SAMS?) doesn't serve? It seems that we would want car owners to use the In Car Meter Program whenever possible because it is very easy to identify when it is in use. It is something already in place. We could advertise this system on the meters to increase usage. Is the need coming from the occasional user who would need the additional service of a pay by phone method because they wouldn't normally get an In

Car Meter? These will also be the persons who don't set up accounts with Parkmobile who may have to spend five or ten minutes (time estimate from comments on the Internet) just setting up a payment when they really just want to run into a store to quickly purchase something, but they don't have the right change. Will we have more people parking in the street than instead of the ramps due to this type of activity? Is this good for the city?

4. Credit card payments at meters are very handy and quick, but Parking Services has indicated the large initial cost for that service. Has there been any investigation of potential increased usage when paying by credit card so that the cost might be recouped over a certain amount of time? Could there be a fee charged for this service similar to an ATM which would help recoup the cost over time? Customers will have a visual indication of their purchase and feel confident they will not get a ticket.
5. For one time users of the pay by phone service, Internet comments indicate it may take from five to ten minutes to set up the payment system. Could this frustrate users more than helping them?
6. For people who get in their car and leave while forgetting or not realizing they have to end the "time" for billing, how will this be handled? Will customers be satisfied with their parking experience?

I think we should be supportive of new technologies as long as implementation would be a good financial decision, and if it would provide significant improvements in customer service.