

City of Rochester, New Hampshire

Parking Review Group

Parking Review Group

June 29, 2023

Cocheco Conference Room- 33 Wakefield Street

Members Present

Kris Ebbeson – Riverstones Framing
Tim Fontneau – Chairman/City Councilor
Andrew Swanberry – Police Dept
Mike Scala – Economic Development
Peter Nourse – Dept of Public Works
Shanna B. Saunders – Director of Planning
Ryan O'Connor – Senior Planner

Members Absent

Ralph DiBernardo – JetPack Comics
Keith Fitts – Planning Board
Todd Radict – Skeletone Records
Marc Saxby – Collectiques

I. Call to Order

Ryan O'Connor called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Ryan O'Connor conducted a silent roll call.

III. Parking Monetization Study

Shanna Saunders introduced the draft Parking Monetization Study recently completed by the consulting firm, Stantec. Liza Cohen and Mitul Ostwal from Stantec joined the meeting virtually to present the study.

L. Cohen presented the draft study beginning with peer city pricing and permitting followed by parking utilization patterns in Rochester. Based on parking counts, the study showed parking availability always remained within the downtown area. Some public parking areas experienced higher volumes at certain periods of the day, but availability remained consistent.



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The current parking conditions were reviewed to include time limits, restrictions, and wayfinding. L. Cohen stressed that wayfinding and clear signage will be an important tool in creating more efficient parking downtown.

Tim Fontneau noted that time limits should vary depending on the time of day. L. Cohen agreed stating that limits should be simple to assist both drivers and enforcement personnel. T. Fontneau said that time limits could be used to discourage employee parking on North Main Street.

T. Fontneau stated his concerns with planning for future growth and wanted to do what we can now to prevent a future parking crunch. L. Cohen said that while charging for parking may not be recommended at this time, metering could be done sooner if there was a significant concern for greater demand. Stantec recommends exploring methods to incentivize better utilization of parking without monetizing before the City takes the step toward monetization. L. Cohen reiterated that monitoring and adjusting how utilization is incentivized will be critical to plan for future development.

S. Saunders noted that we now have a solid baseline for how downtown parking is being used. Regular tracking will help determine when meters will be required to further utilize public parking. Mike Scala said he doesn't think we should wait to install metered parking given the current pace of development. S. Saunders responded that the focus at this time should be on permitting and other enforcement strategies prior to moving forward with monetization.

L. Cohen reviewed how pricing would function in various public parking areas if and when the City moves toward metered parking. Effective permitting for downtown residence was stressed as something to establish regardless of a metered system.

IV. Overview & Next Steps

S. Saunders reviewed the original parking study completed by Stantec. The parking availability concerns were reviewed as well as the cost of structured parking, the mission of the Parking Review Group (PRG), and methods to incentivize more efficient utilization.

S. Saunders presented draft recommendations to the PRG based on both studies completed by Stantec, survey data, and information gathered at the poster session (2/23/23) and "Porch Fest" (9/25/22). S. Saunders recommended the following as possible solutions to downtown parking:

- Incentivizing parking on the outskirts of the downtown area. Review time restrictions on North Main and other core downtown parking areas to incentivize long-term parking in satellite lots. This will involve reviewing and better delineating parking restrictions to increase turnover of spaces within the core downtown with install clear signage and wayfinding to easily locate alternative public parking areas.



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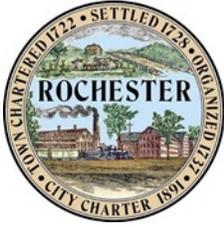
- Create a permitting system. To better manage residential parking and future development, a permitting system is needed to restrict long-term parking in more business-oriented areas and ensure a system is in place to anticipate future residential buildout. Underutilized areas would be designated for residential parking to remove cars from spaces better utilized for business traffic. Permits may also be explored for employees of downtown businesses.
- Review the potential for shared parking. Several private parking lots exist downtown which are not utilized after business hours. Partnerships may be explored with these institutions to allow public parking outside of operating hours.
- Explore the potential for a parking betterment district. Currently, there are no parking requirements within the Downtown Commercial zone. Regulations would allow developers to create parking or pay per required space to fund future metered parking, enhanced enforcement, or potential structured parking. The funds may also be used to improve pedestrian access and safety to ensure destinations can be reasonably reached from lots outside of the core downtown area.
- Develop a schedule to regularly gather downtown parking counts. At this time, monetizing parking may not be the most effective tool to utilize currently available parking. Regular parking utilization counts, and a review of permitting, enforcement, and restrictions will be vital to ensure efficient parking can be maintained. This data will help influence when metering should be used or how other restrictions should change.

M. Scala reiterated that permitting needs to be a focus, leasing of parking lots does not function. T. Fontneau agreed and said we could explore working with individual residences, property managers, and business owners. Permits could also be a part of unit rental agreements. Ryan O'Connor noted that the parking study recommended permitting be reissued monthly or on a timeline which ensured permitted spots were consistently being utilized.

Kris Ebbeson stated that handicapped spaces need to be considered as further restrictions or permits are planned. T. Fontneau said that with a handicapped placard, a car should be able to park anywhere regardless of restrictions. M. Scala noted that additional handicapped spaces will be created in the new Union Street lot once complete.

S. Saunders explained that alternatives to parking downtown also need to be explored. Extending our bike lanes and further developing the riverwalk are great ways for pedestrians to access downtown, especially from surrounding neighborhoods. R. O'Connor informed the group that a walkability study is currently underway with the assistance of the Stafford County Regional Planning Commission. This will assist in influencing where improvements need to be made for both accessibility and general walkability.

S. Saunders reiterated that enforcement is going to be key with any new restrictions, regardless of meters, time limits or permitting. The group also discussed the need to increase fines.



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S. Saunders revisited the initial PRG action item to assess the feasibility of a parking garage. The PRG unanimously agreed that they do not support this option and currently have the capacity to support our parking needs.

S. Saunders said that staff would finalize their recommendations based on this discussion and schedule another PRG meeting after the Fourth of July.

Parking Review Group Meeting adjourned at 5:38.

Respectfully submitted,

Ryan O'Connor
Senior Planner

DRAFT