

## **PARKING ADVISORY PANEL MEETING**

The PARKING ADVISORY PANEL (PAP) met on Tuesday, December 15, 2020, at 3:30 p.m. as a virtual Zoom meeting.

The meeting was opened by the Acting Chair Kirby Hutto. The following members were present: Jake Mooney, Jamelle Bouie, Danny Yoder, Joan Fenton. Michael Cusano, and Mike Rodi were unable to attend. City staff in attendance included Chris Engel, Rick Siebert and Jason Ness.

Mr. Hutto began the meeting by proposing the acceptance of the draft minutes from the last meeting. They were unanimously approved.

### **The Parking Action Plan**

The discussion opened with a brief discussion how the Parking Action Plan was developed from the 2015 Nelson Nygaard study. He followed by screen sharing the Plan implementation white paper previously circulated among Panel members and briefed some of the high points of the implementation over the last five years. There followed a wide-ranging discussion of the three primary plan objectives.

Fenton asked about the utilization of the 5<sup>th</sup> St park and ride lot. Siebert said he did not have any specific utilization numbers but it was virtually unused. She also asked about the Mall employee discount-parking rate. Siebert said it capped out all day parking at a maximum of \$7 as discounted from the normal all day rate of \$12. Hutto asked about the utilization and advertising. Siebert indicated he did not have specific number but pre-covid it was rather popular and used about 30 parkers a day. He said advertising was posted on the city website and people seemed to largely know about it by word of mouth. After further discussion, Siebert clarified the park and ride was free to park and served by the CAT once an hour. Fenton suggested that the park and ride needed to be better advertised with way finding signage and perhaps served by carpools or private rides to and from the Mall area.

Hutto brought the conversation back to optimizing resources and suggested more consistent parking enforcement was a part of that idea. Siebert then added some comments Mr. Rodi, who was unable to join the meeting had sent by email. According to Siebert, Rodi had recommended rephrasing the Grow Parking Supply objective to “assure inventory is maintained in accordance with demand.” Siebert went on to say that Rodi had recommended a metric on demand be established. Hutto then asked about the status of interactive real time way finding signs to the garages. Siebert indicated that nothing was currently scheduled based on the cost of such a system, the need to select good sign locations and BAR issues regarding lighted signs.

That comment moved the discussion of identifying downtown parking customers. Mooney commented that there is a problem of a false perception that there is a lack of downtown parking. Fenton suggested parking may need to partner with the private sector to create ongoing parking advertising. She said CPC and DBAC had partnered in the past to do so. Yoder suggested that this long-standing perception of a lack of parking may have something to do with the geography that limits the view of available parking. He also suggested that a lack of available parking may be used

as an excuse by some who simply do not want to come downtown. Hutto suggested CAVB may be the best way to advertise around this issue, particularly to out of town visitors. Yoder brought the discussion back to the need for data. He suggested data on who did not come to downtown and why might help. Hutto countered that perhaps the focus should be on the out of towners as a more easily influenced population. Engel commented that CAVB is in flux right now but they may be an opportunity. He also noted the wayfinding that was updated, at some considerable cost, within the last 15 or so years. Fenton suggested that the West Main/Water St intersection needed to be improved with regard to parking. Hutto suggested this could be part of the West Main St streetscape project.

Mooney suggested the Panel needed to make the Parking Action Plan consistent with and support the Transportation Section Comprehensive Plan. He indicated he hoped the outside partners planned to be invited at the next meeting who could assist in that. Siebert agreed and indicated he hoped for and expected that kind of assistance. Mooney went on to request some type of routine quarterly reporting on parking utilization be part of the Panel business although he understood that this may be limited because of the cost and difficulty in gathering data on private parking utilization. Siebert indicated there is a privately operated website that tracks and displays space availability in the two city garages. He indicated he would send that link to the panel members. Hutto suggested we invite the consultant working on the comprehensive plan to join us. Hutto suggested we could also reach out to any West Main or Corner business group. Jason Ness he would contact business leaders in those areas although they did not have an organized business association like the DBAC.

Yoder returned to Rodi's recommendation to change the wording of the supply and demand objective to better emphasis that the only solution is not to simply build more parking. In particular, he related this to the perception of some that there is not enough parking near the Mall. He suggested that perhaps if there is a long-standing perception that there is not enough parking downtown then no matter how much parking is built you may never change that perception. Siebert suggested that increasing parking supply can be done by changing mode of transportation. Fenton gave the example of the opening of the Water St Garage and its positive effect on demand and it as a positive force in increasing economic development. Yoder suggested another aspect of this issue is price. A way to reduce parking demand is to increase price. Siebert suggested that price is a very difficult issue with regard to publicly owned parking because driving parking demand through price increases is economically discriminatory. Hutto said he agreed and indicated there is a balance in price that must be considered. Mooney suggested this brings us back to the need for multiple options for transportation as a way to balance the need for parking. Hutto asked if there was any data on the scooter program as an alternate mode of transportation and the utilization of the free trolley. Ness indicated he could say that the scooter vendor had been taking a significant hit since covid. Fenton asked if there was any data on change in ridership of the bus since the change of route on 2nd St. Fenton suggested adding additional free bus routes or making existing routes free may be a way to increase ridership and reduce parking demand. Yoder voiced his support of Fenton's point. Mooney asked what the level of effort was anticipated in updating the Plan. Engel suggested the level of effort was certainly less than in the creation of the original plan. He did not anticipate hiring a consultant to again. He suggested that the items that had been completed form the original plan be removed and the plan be updated with new objectives. He suggested that being in the midst of the covid health emergency was asking this more difficult simply because we cannot gartuntee exactly what parking demand may be like post covid.

Hutto, as the Chair, then opened the floor for public comment. Rory Stolzenberg recommended that all the Panel members reread the 2015 Nelson Nygaard parking study and pay particular attention to the recommendations. Stolzenberg then went on to highlight what he saw as some of the important

conclusions of the study. In particular, he asked then the Panel members pay particular attention to page 61 of the study. Fenton then responded saying that the cost of parking had a significant detrimental impact on businesses in their ability to hire and retain good minimum wage employees. Stolzenberg responded that the creation of a wait list because of under priced parking was discriminatory on newer businesses. Siebert responded that he agreed that waiting lists were bad. He indicated that simply raising prices until only those who could afford parking was not a good solution or an alternative of offering an annual lottery for parking was also bad. Hutto brought the discussion back to the need for more consistent enforcement of 2 hour parking restriction to make the on-street spaces operate as designed.

Hutto asked if there was any public comment from anyone else. None was offered.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:43 PM.