

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA
Parking and Traffic Committee
September 22, 2005

The Parking and Traffic Committee met in formal session at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, September 22, 2005 in The Alcazar Conference Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Daniel Sullivan and the following were present:

1. ROLL CALL

Daniel Sullivan
William Abare
Gerald Dixon
John Marples
Richard Pinto
Nancy Sikes-Kline
Les Thomas
David Toner
Len Weeks

Excused: Phillip Moan

Resigned: Fred Harris

City Staff: John Regan, Chief Operations Officer
Timothy Burchfield, Chief Administrative Officer
James Whitehouse, Staff Attorney
Pam Halterman, Recording Secretary

Also present: Pat Parets, Resident

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from the June 23, 2005 meeting were approved as presented.

3. OLD BUSINESS¹

3.a Staff update on the VIC Transportation Facility

Mr. Regan offered the committee the following points in regards to the VIC parking facility:

- ◆ Currently going vertical and all aspects of the project were on schedule
- ◆ Projected budget currently at \$18.3 million dollars

- ◆ City purchasing the pre-cast concrete for a tax saving
- ◆ Construction had generated much interest and comments from the public

3.b. Staff update on the Residential Parking Program

- 1) Distribution of Ordinance**
- 2) Implementation on Avenida Menendez**

Mr. Regan distributed documents to the committee and noted the following points:

- ◆ The City Commission had adopted the Residential Parking Program Ordinance

¹ Mr. Dixon and Mr. Weeks arrived at 8:33 am.

- ◆ Program would start on Avenida Menendez
- ◆ Either a petition from the neighborhood or a traffic count issue was needed to trigger a Residential Parking Program in an area which had occurred with Avenida Menendez
- ◆ Staff had been working on a resolution to establish and involve twenty-three parking spaces located south of the B & B and on the west side of Avenida Menendez
- ◆ The resolution would establish the area involved and parking rates
- ◆ Signage had been prepared to install along the roadway and decals would be designed and ordered
- ◆ Staff's opinion was that establishing the Avenida Menendez Residential Parking Program did not have a major impact to the City's parking and traffic issues and the City did not want to unveil more decal programs until additional parking spaces were available
- ◆ Did not want to add parking pressures to Flagler College and other areas of the City

3.c. Staff update on the signage program

Mr. Regan offered the following information to the committee regarding the signage program:

- ◆ Walker Parking Consultants were under contract with the City for whatever services might be required for parking and traffic issues
- ◆ Consultants had given staff a scope of work to implement the signage program which involved directional and way-finding signage elements
- ◆ Walker Parking consultants would create bid packages for the signage program

3.d. Staff update on the timeline

Mr. Regan submitted an updated Masterplan timeline to the committee members and noted the following points:

- ◆ Two major areas need direction and guidance from the PAT Committee which included the development of the historic area parking policy and the transit system involving performance criteria and vehicle types
- ◆ Advertisement would be initiated in order to generate vehicle selection options from interested companies²
- ◆ Needed to specify goals of the mass transit system
- ◆ A student about to graduate with a degree in civil engineering would assist the City in the parking and traffic elements
- ◆ The VIC parking facility would be completed in July 2006
- ◆ The City would possibly attempt to obtain Federal funding for the transit portion of the Masterplan

Pat Parets, resident, stated that she had submitted a petition to the City for Residential Permit Parking in her neighborhood and commended staff for moving forward with the program in the Avenida Menendez area. She said the newly adopted ordinance was generic and would apply to any neighborhood in the City. She noted that parking issues were generally lighter during the end of summer.

Mr. Marples questioned whether any staff changes had occurred with the National Guard because they were one of the major parking problems in the downtown area.

² Mr. Burchfield arrived at 8:40 am.

Mr. Regan advised that the National Guard planned to lease space in the Lightner Museum building which would change the vehicle load near the National Guard location. He noted that fifty to sixty office positions would be moving into the Lightner Museum building. He said Mr. Burchfield had been involved in the negotiations with the National Guard. He asked Mr. Burchfield to summarize the situation to the committee.

Mr. Burchfield advised that the City had been in negotiations with the help from the Pastor of Trinity Methodist Church located on Bridge Street in regards to leased parking spaces at the church's parking lot. He stated that the City was ready to take over the property in order to convert it into parking for the National Guard and to help alleviate the parking problem in the area. He noted that the National Guard would also lease parking spaces from the VIC parking garage, and would be the City's first tenant to utilize the new parking facility.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Burchfield advised that the City had leased parking spaces, located off Bridge Street, from the owners of the old Record building which had originally been offered to merchants in the Lightner Museum area; however, the City did not receive any takers for the parking spaces. Therefore, he noted that City employees and tenant employees were utilizing the available spaces. He added that it was a private parking lot that opened to the public only during the weekends.

Mr. Sullivan suggested that language should be placed on the water bill in order to notify the public of the available parking during the weekends. He stated that only nine months remained before the new parking

facility was ready; therefore, the committee should be reviewing signage and the transit system elements.

Mr. Regan advised that the City would begin to advertise throughout the parking industry, and one major issue in the advertising would include performance criteria. He noted that the City was interested in alternative fuel sources such as electric and propane vehicles. He said language would be included to find demonstrated success in the tourism environment. He stated that staff would provide cut sheets on vehicles at the next meeting. He asked for comments from the committee members.

Mr. Sullivan said everyone was currently concerned with fuel prices and it was an important element of a transit vehicle.

Mr. Pinto informed the committee that Gordy Wilson, from the National Park Service, had recently made a presentation to the historic area counsel regarding the elimination of the 160 parking spaces located in front of the fort. He noted that the NPS would begin to take public comment about the plan to eliminate those parking spaces. He voiced that his concern, since being appointed to the committee, involved increasing parking and not eliminating it. He said he did not want the new parking facility to be used as an excuse to reduce parking in other areas in the City. He suggested that the Committee and City should take a position on the situation and begin to work with the NPS in order to maintain the parking spaces set for elimination because once the parking spaces were eliminated, they would be gone forever.³

³ Ms. Sikes-Kline arrived at 8:53 am.

Mr. Weeks noted that the City had worked hard to have those 160 parking spaces remain open to the general public. He asked for the City's position on the issue.

Mr. Regan advised that the City had no official position. He noted that the parking lot was one of the largest in the City. He explained that the parking lot area had been part of the fort's defense field and the NPS desired to restore the area as part of their interpretation program for tourists. He said the City had always thought that the garage would open up new opportunities in the City.

Mr. Weeks noted that the City needed to add parking spaces to the current deficit already being felt in the downtown area. He stated that each parking space in the garage would cost between \$40,000.00 and \$50,000.00 multiplied by one-hundred and sixty spaces. He noted that it added up to a lot of money for the City to absorb.

Mr. Regan suggested that it would be appropriate for the City to begin dialog with the National Parks Service regarding the parking spaces.

Mr. Weeks suggested that it involved much money and a burden for the City to handle.

Mr. Pinto suggested that due to the loss of those spaces, tourists would begin to park in residential areas which was not desirable. He noted that the Fort parking lot had been in existence for many years and it would take a while for people to adjust to the change. He said, due to the NPS timeline, the City and Committee needed to inform those people handling the matter the importance of their proposal.⁴

⁴ Mr. Burchfield departed at 8:57 am.

Mr. Regan advised that it would not be an issue to absorb one-hundred and sixty parking spaces in the new parking garage; however, it would take a significant hit on peaking capacity and would reduce the ability to process vehicles by approximately four-hundred vehicles each day.

Mr. Dixon stated that currently the NPS parking lot was used by tourists and not locals.

Mr. Weeks suggested that some locals used the parking lot while shopping along the bayfront.

Mr. Sullivan stated that the area was popular. He noted that the horse and carriages would be moved from the bayfront which would allow more vehicular parking. He pointed out that the Federal government owned the lot.

Mr. Pinto noted that the Federal government would be asking for public comments; therefore, the Committee should ask staff to create a document to indicate possible impacts to the City if the NPS decided to eliminate the one-hundred and sixty parking spaces.

Mr. Marples suggested that the parking space elimination was probably a done deal.

Mr. Regan and several committee members stated that it was not a done deal.

Mr. Pinto suggested that if the City took a strong position, the Federal government would listen.

Mr. Marples agreed with Mr. Pinto and suggested that the committee create a document which would outline the impacts, fair mitigation and costs to the City.

Mr. Pinto said the committee could not create the document; however, they could ask the City Commission to direct staff to handle the matter.

Mr. Weeks stated that it was a complex issue. He noted that the proposed orientation center was to be constructed on City property. He suggested that more information and plans were probably available that the committee was not aware of.

Mr. Pinto noted that the public comment time period had started in October.

Mr. Regan advised that staff could ask Gordy Wilson to make a presentation to the Committee at the October meeting.

Mr. Toner stated that he would not take a position on the issue until more information was obtained.

Mr. Pinto said Gordy Wilson had mentioned that the NPS would begin their process shortly and he was not the person who would receive the public comments but facilitated the process of obtaining comments. He suggested that the Committee pass a motion which specified that the matter was significant and the Committee would like to see staff begin to work and alert the City Commission of the issue.

Dr. Abare stated that if the city was losing 160 parking spaces then it would mean that the City was only building a 1017 space facility and not an 1177 space parking garage. He noted that everyone was anticipating more spaces and not less and once parking inventory was eliminated, it would not be returned. He suggested that it was not in the best interest of the City to lose those spaces and the City needed

all current inventory plus more. He said it was short-sighted not to take an interest in what the NPS had proposed. He stated that the Committee should take a stance which would be consistent with what the Committee had previously voiced about parking inventory. He noted that if the parking incentives were attractive, the City would not have a problem filling the new parking facility. He expressed that he was in favor of asking the City Commission to take a position on the NPS parking space elimination issue.

MOTION

Dr. Abare moved to recommend that the City Commission take a position opposing the possible elimination of parking spaces at the Castillo de San Marcos site. Mr. Pinto seconded.

Mr. Weeks noted that the cost total for those spaces would be close to \$4 million dollars.

In response to an inquiry from Ms. Sikes-Kline, Mr. Regan advised that the NPS had only started to take public comments regarding the matter. He said they had not selected alternative solutions.

Mr. Weeks noted that the NPS had considered the Mary Peck House site as one alternative for the NPS visitor information center.

Mr. Dixon suggested that eliminating the parking at the fort would make a nicer appearance for the City. He noted that the parking space loss could be absorbed at the new VIC facility. He said the overall Masterplan mentioned eliminating parking from the street to make it wider for pedestrian; however, it would not be possible until other parking inventory was created.

Ms. Sikes-Kline noted that one of the Committee's priorities involved moving the parking outside of the downtown area and to reduce the impact of vehicles on the streets. She said the vision plan, which had been approved by the City Commission, involved the creation of only two lanes of vehicular traffic with a lane for horse and carriages on the bayfront. She indicated that the City was aware that surface parking lots, which were mostly privately owned, would be eliminated in the future. Therefore, she voiced that she could not support the motion.

Mr. Marples stated that the elimination of the NPS surface parking lot would be a significant impact to the parking inventory. He suggested that the NPS should offer the City something in return for the impact they would cause the city. He noted that money would not fix the issue of decreased parking inventory.

Mr. Dixon suggested that the City should make the NPS aware of the financial impacts to the City.

Mr. Pinto suggested that the City would not be high on the NPS's list for funds to help defer the cost involved with the elimination of the parking lot. He stated that the NPS should have a Masterplan to eliminate the parking spaces after another parking solution was developed.

Mr. Marples suggested that the NPS did not yet understand the significant loss it would be for the City.

Mr. Regan advised that the economic issue was minimal because the new garage could handle the required parking spaces; however, the social cost to the community would need to be dealt with.

Mr. Pinto said his business would feel the economic impacts with the elimination of those parking spaces.

Mr. Regan advised that he had been working with the City of Savannah about parking issues. He noted that they planned to eliminate a very large fifty year old parking structure which was located on the historic town square. He explained that they would construct a new facility with four stories underground and restore the town square at the same time. He noted that one-half of the structure would be below the water table.

Vote on the motion.

Ayes: Abare, Pinto, Dixon, Marples, Weeks

Nays: Sikes-Kline, Thomas, Toner

Motion carried 5/3 with Mr. Sullivan abstaining from the vote.

Mr. Dixon said elimination was not the solution but an alternative must be created.

Mr. Pinto agreed that alternative parking should be created prior to the elimination of the parking spaces.

Mr. Thomas suggested that a representative from the NPS attend the next PAT Committee meeting to offer more information.

Mr. Pinto noted that the NPS allowed a limited time for public comment, and he wanted to make sure that the City was aware and could offer input on the issue.

Mr. Sullivan voiced that the committee's position was correct.

Mr. Marples asked Mr. Sullivan, if he felt the committee was correct, why he did not vote in favor of the motion.

Mr. Sullivan stated that it was up to the City Commission to make a recommendation to the NPS. He said if it was left for him to be the deciding vote, he would have voted in favor of the motion. He suggested that more discussion was needed on the timeline. He noted that only nine months remained to make a final determination on some of the elements of the timeline.

4. NEW BUSINESS

4.a. Discussion and detailed development of the Historic area parking policies. Goal setting and performance criteria development of the following issues.

Mr. Regan stated that the Committee should discuss the policies during the next three months. He noted that staff would create a complete inventory of how the streets appeared with the existing policies. He said they would dissect each street to determine the best policy for each individual area. He noted that staff had calculated quick numbers and found that between \$100,000.00 and \$250,000.00 of revenue could be obtained just from meters located around the plaza; however, the City's future plans involved eliminating meters around the plaza and elsewhere in the City. He suggested that each block section of the City would need to be reviewed separately. He stated that each month the policies would be better refined, and by January they should be prepared to implement the new policies. He noted that a single new pay-n-display machine would eliminate seven meters; although it was not complex from a construction point of view. He said the City would be changing parking technology because it was not practical to retain meters.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Regan advised that the Masterplan had been conceptual in regards to changing parking policies and meter rates being raised. He noted that dealing with many quarters would be difficult but locals could have reduced parking rates with smart-cards.

Dr. Abare stated that he had previously raised an issue regarding new technology and enforcement. He noted that pay-n-display machines would provide a very small piece of paper to display in a vehicle window; however, it would require a parking attendant to walk to each vehicle and be close enough to read the information on the paper. Therefore, he pointed out that the City would need to significantly expand its enforcement personnel. He suggested that as a cost standpoint, it appeared that the City was using "a cannon ball to kill a fly". He questioned how much technology the City was buying, when in reality, a much less sophisticated program would work better and be easier to manage. He noted that a parking attendant would need to assure that the small paper had the correct date and time which would require more time being spent at each vehicle.

Mr. Weeks voiced that he had been a big proponent of an alternative to meters. He said that in his travels he had found that many cities in other countries had pay-n-display machines; therefore, the system did work and parking attendants were currently enforcing the program. He suggested that staff should not worry so much about collecting quarters if the parking rates were raised to \$2.00 per hour. He pointed out that he had visitors frequently begging for quarters at his restaurant. He suggested that the proposed \$2.00 per hour meter rates

were too expensive. He stated that parking needed to be convenient for visitors and tourists. He explained that staff should review alternative solutions and remember that parking was a service which the City was providing for visitors to be able to come downtown.

Mr. Regan advised that staff would handle how the changes would impact the City. He suggested that the Committee needed to review all elements of the big picture.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the timeline determined when an element of the big picture needed to be completed.

Mr. Regan advised that parking technology criteria needed to be completed by January 2006.

Mr. Sullivan noted that garage parking would be \$1.25 per hour with a maximum of \$7.00; therefore, it would be necessary to have higher meter rates on the street.

Dr. Abare asked staff if they had read or reviewed decal ordinance models and high technology metering systems. He suggested that purchasing pay-n-display machines would be a substantial investment for the City. He stated that if the City went with the machine they would see increased problems with public relations. He said the City had a parking decal ordinance which was designed to do the exact opposite of what was being suggested.

Mr. Weeks noted that the City had many surface parking lots.

Mr. Pinto noted that the Residential Decal Program would begin to reduce parking in the City which would help to persuade visitors to use the new garage. He said parking inventory was not being increased which was desired. He

stated that the Residential Decal Program would intensify because residents wanted their own private parking space on the street. He expressed that the City would have spent millions on a garage that would not be utilized.

Ms. Sikes-Kline noted that staff wanted the Committee to develop criteria in order to implement, on a block-by-block basis, the Masterplan which had been agreed upon. She suggested that the Committee needed to think of what goals they wanted to accomplish, whether it was directing people to use the new parking garage or set criteria for parking rates. She stated that the Committee should consider meeting more often in order to complete the tasks.

Mr. Sullivan suggested that the Committee wait until October to determine whether more frequent meetings would be necessary. He noted that staff could structure the items that need to be completed.

Mr. Regan said it was possible that parking meters would play a role in the parking issue. He affirmed that staff would offer rate information to the Committee in October. He noted that parking boundaries might need to change because people liked to search the historic districts and utilize free parking spaces.

Mr. Marples suggested that the City could not implement a parking change in one area of the city without expecting spillover into other areas.

1) Elimination of free parking

Mr. Regan questioned whether free parking should be eliminated in the Historic Districts.

Dr. Abare said free parking should not be eliminated in the HP Districts.

Mr. Regan advised that he would like to review each element separately and obtain the Committee's view on each item.

Consensus of several committee members was to eliminate free parking as one goal of the plan.

2) Rate structure for on-street and off-street parking

Consensus of the committee was to involve different rates for on-street and off-street parking.

3) Rate structure for reserved parking

Staff would return with rate schedules.

4) Days and time of metering for on-street and off-street parking

Mr. Regan noted that Sunday was the largest revenue day for the City and the parking meter policy involved monitoring six days per week until 6:00 pm. He questioned whether the policy should change to include parking meters being monitored seven days with longer evening hours.

Mr. Weeks suggested that free parking be allowed at night because that was when businesses needed the visitors. He said he was not in favor of charging on Sundays.

Ms. Sikes-Kline agreed with Mr. Weeks. She suggested that the changes should involve moving vehicles where the City wanted and not allowing visitors to park where they wanted.

Mr. Sullivan noted that Sunday afternoons were crowded in the

downtown area and charging for parking should be considered.

Mr. Pinto said Saturday afternoons were more crowded than Sunday afternoons. He stated that it would be difficult to charge on Sunday mornings due to the many church services being held.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Weeks, Mr. Regan advised that the purpose to charge parking fees on Sundays was an attempt to direct tourists to the garage and off the streets. He said staff would provide an analysis with free meter parking until after 12:00 pm on Sundays.

5) Parking fines rate structure

Mr. Regan noted that the current fine for overtime parking was \$7.50; however, the Masterplan called to raise the fine to \$20.00. He questioned whether the Committee wanted to review a fine structure or leave the fines at the current amount.

Mr. Weeks suggested that \$7.50 was a high enough penalty for overtime parking. He said raising the fine would not make someone drive to a parking garage and would only make it more inconvenient for honest, hardworking people. He noted that Parking Enforcement was the most efficient department in the City.

Mr. Dixon suggested that the fines should be raised slowly over a period of time.

Mr. Weeks stated that payment options should include prepaying along with paying the parking fees when ready to depart.

Dr. Abare asked how long the current rate structure had been enforced.

Mr. Regan said he was unaware of the time period; however, it had been a long time.

Mr. Toner said he would like to know what other tourist destinations charged for overtime parking.

Ms. Sikes-Kline mentioned that some cities had different colored meters with different rates.

6) Payment methods

Mr. Regan advised that he would research and return with more information. He noted that the Masterplan involved two rate structures with locals prepaying at a lower rate. He asked for input regarding prepayments and using cards.

Mr. Marples noted that a company had made a presentation to the Committee regarding different payment methods.

Mr. Toner suggested that being able to use plastic would be visitor friendly. He noted that tiered fees should be available for local residents.

7) Other

Ms. Parets stated that the new Residential Permit Program ordinance did not provide exclusive parking but would provide residential parking for the City's citizens and it had addressed concerns of those citizens living within the City limits. She suggested that people with travel-trailers did not find it inconvenient to park all day on Avenida Menendez and only receive a \$20.00 fine. She noted that people parked all day at a meter and only received a \$7.50 fine. She asked that enforcement be reviewed because people should be receiving multiple tickets.

Mr. Weeks affirmed that the law specified that multiple tickets could be issued on a vehicle the same day.

Mr. Marples noted that the Masterplan mentioned that signage specifications would be due in December and asked for a report from staff in October.

5. DISCUSSION OF TOPICS FOR THE FOLLOWING MEETING

None

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.⁵

⁵ Transcribed by Pam Halterman, Recording Secretary