

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA
Parking and Traffic Committee
February 25, 2010

The Parking and Traffic Committee met in formal session at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, February 25, 2010 in The Alcazar Conference Room, City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Len Weeks and the following were present:

1. Roll Call

Len Weeks, Chairperson
Susan Burk, Vice Chairperson
Richard Pinto, Historic St. Augustine Area Council Representative
Ken Russom, Flagler College Representative
Gerry Dixon
Phil Moan
Jannette Berk

City Staff:

Ron Brown, City Attorney
John Regan, Chief Operations Officer
Mark Knight, Director, Planning and Building
Mark Litzinger, City Comptroller
Darlene Kirkland, Recording Secretary

2. Approval of Minutes

Janette Berk requested that page 1, column 1, paragraph 4 read, "She said it was not *only* a matter of money;" and page 2, column 2, paragraph 4 state, "Ms. Berk *inquired about* the length of time".

The minutes of the January 28, 2010 Parking and Traffic Committee Meeting were approved as amended.

Reports

3.A. Cathy Brown Presentation regarding the COA Shuttle

John Regan, City Operations Officer, stated that questions had been raised whether people employed in St. Augustine that resided in the Jacksonville area could use the Council on Aging (COA) transportation system for their commute. He said that the morning commute would be efficient means of transportation; however, because of

scheduling conflicts, the afternoon commute routes presented issues.¹

Mr. Regan stated that a private/public partnership for parking had been proposed with Trinity Episcopal Church, and was pending final approval by the church. He said that if the contract was approved, it would be submitted to the Commission for review on March 8, 2010. He stated that other area businesses had expressed interest in creating revenue streams through similar parking management agreements with the City. He explained that there had been an organizational meeting with business owners in the West Augustine area, because of road improvements there was no longer on street parking and limited off street parking for businesses. He explained that there were land parcels that could potentially be used through parking management agreements with little infrastructure improvement costs. He stated that a new parking rate structure policy for West Augustine would be necessary. He

¹ Route information attached to original minutes

noted that Commissioner Freeman expressed interest in working with the San Marco business district to create similar projects.

Mr. Regan stated that he had been working with Ms. Berk to possibly create a federally subsidized shuttle system for the downtown area.

Ms. Berk stated that she would research cities with similar services and report to the board during a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Weeks agreed that the current rate structure for West Augustine would not be feasible, and questioned the possible options.

Mr. Regan replied that the first consideration would be a user fee based system, with both public and employee parking lots.

Mr. Weeks suggested that businesses could purchase parking vouchers for customers.

Mr. Regan stated that the goal was to manage parking, infrastructure improvements, leasing costs for land parcels and traffic enforcement. He stated that staff could review costs and projected usage to propose a working budget.

MOTION

Mr. Pinto MOVED to authorize city staff to review possible rate structures and define zone boundaries. The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Burk and APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

Ms. Burk questioned whether a church would have to pay ad valorem taxes on an income producing parking lot, and the response was affirmative.

3.B. Mark Litzinger, City Comptroller, Presentation regarding the usage of nine handicap spaces located in the Tolomato parking lot

Mark Litzinger, City Comptroller, stated that parking enforcement had reviewed the Tolomato parking lot morning, noon and late afternoon.² He explained that the lot had been full during certain time periods of the day, and a few vehicles with handicap parking passes were parked in regular spaces; however, the lot was not always at maximum capacity. He said the parking coordinator had contacted waiting list applicants in order to better utilize the parking lot. He stated that notifications regarding overflow parking directed to the parking garage had been sent.

Mr. Litzinger stated that the Park-Now card fliers would soon be included with City utility bills. He said the purchase-by-mail program had begun; however, it had not been officially announced. He suggested contacting St. Johns County to possibly include Park-Now card information with their utility bills.

Mr. Moan questioned whether an application could be included to purchase a Park-Now card by mail.

Mr. Litzinger replied that a person could call and give payment information over the phone, which included an additional \$1.50 service charge, and a card would be mailed to them. He stated that the goal was to make it as convenient as possible to obtain a Park-Now card.

Mr. Weeks suggested adding a feature allowing customers to pay for the card along with their utility bill payment.

Mr. Pinto stated that if an evaluation of the Tolomato parking lot was conducted during warmer months the results would likely be different. He felt that if handicap people were parking in regular spaces that showed a need for additional handicap spaces.

Mr. Weeks stated that another evaluation of the Tolomato parking lot should be

² Report attached to original minutes

conducted during March or April. He questioned whether a reserved space could be used for handicap parking.

Mr. Litzinger replied that generally handicap individuals parked in metered spaces, because they would not be charged a fee; however, parking enforcement would continue to evaluate handicapped parking to determine a need for more handicap spaces.

Mr. Weeks felt that there was a high demand for short term parking especially during peak usage periods, and suggested adding additional metered spaces.

Mr. Regan explained the shared parking method, in which every space was metered, but reserved parking pass holders could park at a metered space using a parking decal. He stated that it was the method that would be used for the Trinity Episcopal Church parking lot, which would enable the financing of the lot reconfiguration and the Aviles Street project. He pointed out that the shared parking method might not work during peak periods for the Tolomato lot, because of bed and breakfast guest parking.

Mr. Pinto questioned whether temporary passes could be issued to permit holders, and overflow parking could be directed to the parking garage.

Mr. Litzinger replied that the overflow system would be difficult, because when there were no attendants to allow permit holders out, they would be required to pay the daily fee to exit the garage, and then request a refund.

Mr. Pinto questioned whether an exit code system could be installed.

Mr. Litzinger replied that the current entry and exit system cost nearly \$500,000.

Mr. Weeks stated that the goal was to maximize the spaces all week, not just during peak periods.

After a brief discussion, there was a consensus to have staff further evaluate how to optimize the use of the Tolomato lot.

4. Other Business³

Kim Drozd, local business owner, said local merchants felt that local residents did would patronize their shops because of parking issues. She stated that many downtown businesses were in danger of having to close down, and she expressed an urgent need to encourage residents to patronize local businesses.

Ms. Burk felt that there should be free parking for local residents.

Mr. Litzinger pointed out that whether the parking was free for residents or not, there was limited parking, especially during peak tourist seasons.

Allen Drozd, local business owner, felt that just offering free parking would not encourage residents to come to the downtown area, there had to be more of an incentive. He stated that some merchants were working together to bring in more local shoppers.

Mr. Pinto stated that most downtown businesses relied on peak seasonal tourism, and locals patronized businesses more during the evening hours when parking was free.

Mr. Drozd stated that they had encouraged businesses to provide incentives for residents.

Ms. Berk felt that parking issues were not the only reason locals would not frequent the downtown area; it was also the lack of activity.

³ Commissioner Errol Jones arrived at 9:08 A.M.

Mr. Litzinger stated that most complaints he received were regarding parking convenience and traffic congestion, which discouraged local residents.

Mr. Dixon stated that the parking garage had been constructed for long term parking so the metered spaces would be available for anyone that required short term parking; however, the construction costs had to be covered.

Mr. Moan felt there were few businesses downtown that would draw locals during daytime hours.

Ms. Drozd questioned why residents could not park for free.

Ms. Berk replied that parking revenue was used to offset costs related to maintenance and security of the downtown area.

Mr. Weeks felt that the problem was the public perception of parking, and the goal was to promote discounted parking through the Park-Now card program.

Mr. Regan stated that every parking space had been inventoried to develop the Park-Now Program; however, local use was still low. He pointed out that the program had been developed for residents.

Ms. Drozd felt that there was little public knowledge of the Park-Now cards, and she suggested creating kiosks or allowing merchants to sell the cards.

Mr. Pinto stated that advertising the Park-Now cards should also target residents that lived outside city limits. He stated that there were no inexpensive parking incentives that merchants could give customers to use for future visits.

Mr. Litzinger stated that in addition to promoting the Park-Now cards, there should be incentives to encourage residents to use the parking garage, especially during peak tourist seasons.

Mr. Moan felt that it was more important for residents to have quick access to businesses by on street parking. He expressed concern about meters accepting money after hours.

Mr. Litzinger said that people putting money in the meters after hours had been an on going problem; however, there were notices on the meters.

Mr. Weeks stated that the goals were to make the public aware that there was free parking after 5:00 P.M. and Sundays and to promote the Park-Now cards.

Ms. Drozd questioned whether merchants could be provided with information to pass along to customers regarding the meters and Park-Now cards, and the response was affirmative.

Mr. Moan pointed out that most popular cities did not provide free parking for anyone.

Ms. Berk felt that the issues with the merchants should be discussed with the Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Pinto stated that even though parking was free after 5:00 P.M., there were few shops open during those hours; however, he felt that the atmosphere changed, because restaurants and bars were open.

Ms. Burk stated that a plan had to be created and put into effect to determine what would increase business.

Mr. Weeks stated that residents had complained that when they were on a schedule it was difficult to patronize businesses in the downtown area. He questioned the status regarding parking vouchers.

Mr. Litzinger stated that he would report the voucher status during the next meeting. He suggested that the committee discuss marketing the vouchers.

5. Discussion Topics for Subsequent Meeting

Presentation by Ron Brown related the horse and carriage routes.

Report by Mark Litzinger related to parking vouchers.

6. Next scheduled meeting – March 25, 2010

So acknowledged.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:02 a.m.⁴

⁴ Transcribed by Darlene Kirkland