

Proposal for a Pilot Parking Improvement District

December 7, 2006

Introduction and background

Several months ago, the city council asked this administration to review the work of the parking commission and the two earlier parking plans submitted by this administration, to make recommendations for a third downtown parking plan. This plan, for a Pilot Parking Improvement District, is the result of that request.

We acknowledge hard work of the Haverhill Central Business District Parking Commission. As the council requested, we used their plan as a starting point.

Numerous officials have meant a tremendous amount of time in developing this plan. They include Merrimack Valley Planning commission traffic expert Tony Komornick, city engineer John Pettis, Jim Flaherty, Pat Noonan, Chief Denaro, Ed Gorski, Charles Eithier and others. We thank them for their efforts.

We were able to raise the money privately to pay for the parking consultant. The City chose Larry Berman of Metered Concepts, Incorporated of Del Ray Beach, Florida. Mr. Berman's report to the city is attached.

To develop this third parking plan, we also held public hearings, and met with numerous people in the downtown area.

Mr. Berman's recommendation, and ours, is that we implement pay for parking in phases, starting in the westerly section (Washington and Wingate Street area) of downtown.

Mr. Berman's recommendation, and ours, is that we do not implement pay for parking at this time in the easterly (Merrimack Street) zone. We do recommend selling permits in the upper level of the Goecke parking deck on Merrimack Street.

Methodology

Our staff began by reviewing the parking commission recommendations, and then reviewing the signage and comparing the signs to the existing ordinances. Our very first step that we recommend is to make certain that signs and ordinances are in sync.

The parking plan we recommend attempts to regulate every space in the westerly section of the downtown and to provide parking spaces that accommodate the various users of the downtown.

This plan will be periodically reviewed as conditions evolve in the downtown area. The first review would be conducted in December 2007.

The proposed plan is an interim plan until a parking facility is built. Once a parking facility is built, then residential parking would be relocated to the parking facility.

Plan Summary

We propose a Parking Improvement District in the Westerly side of the downtown—the Washington/Wingate Street areas. This parking improvement district would generate revenue that would be used for upkeep and security in the area where we charge for parking. We would not put meters on the streets at this time, but would reserve that until a later phase.

This plan would not implement pay for parking on the easterly end of downtown (Merrimack Street) with the exception of selling permits in the Goecke deck.

This proposal would begin by carefully improving the signs and enforcement in the downtown.

We would then sell residential permits in the Washington Wingate Street section of the downtown. We would start with a small number of residential permits and determining the market need.

The city would then begin charging for parking in the lots in the Washington/Wingate Street areas.

Numerous studies have shown that the key to revitalizing an area are streets and sidewalks that are clean, quiet, safe and aesthetically pleasing with good landscape, flowers and other amenities. This proposal for a Parking Improvement District in the Westerly side of downtown creates the revenue stream to keep that area cleaner, safer, and more aesthetically pleasing. I am confident that after a year of testing and improvement, that the noticeable improvements to the downtown would help to generate the public support necessary to expand this project.

PHASE 1—IMMEDIATE

- Update all signs in the westerly area of the downtown,
- Hire two civilian parking enforcement officers for the downtown to free up police officers for more important crime fighting duties
- Update our ordinances, where necessary, to represent the current reality or the changes we wish to make. For example, Wingate and Granite Streets are both one way streets, but the ordinances do not reflect that;
- Limit on street parking to two hours, strictly enforced, except in a few small areas reserved for handicapped parking, and existing 30 minute spots on Washington and Wingate. Whenever possible, use two hour parking for consistency;
- Change the designation on some of the lots as is indicated on the maps to better meet market conditions downtown.
- Strictly enforce the two hour limits on Washington and Wingate streets to provide for customer turnover in these areas.

- Make various small changes in the downtown parking areas to reflect existing market conditions, as is outlined in the attached maps. These proposals would:
 - Designate residential parking areas;
 - Expand the number of areas with 10 hour parking to accommodate the downtown employees;
 - Utilize areas outside of the plan submitted by the parking commission for longer term parking: Granite Street, Locke Street and Locust Street;
 - Whenever possible, have uniformity and simplicity in the signage and enforcement of the parking ordinances.

Phase 2—Residential Permits

- Designate areas for residential parking in the westerly section of the downtown as shown on the maps which are attached;
- Sell residential permits at the rate of \$25 per month. Maps are attached which show the areas we propose be designated as residential parking;

Phase 3—Pay for Parking in Certain Lots

- At the end of a three month period of residential permits, we recommend charging for parking in certain lots in the westerly area downtown. We will approach the council for authorization before implementing this phase of the plan.
- Charge for parking in the Washington Street/Wingate Street area in the lots 8 am to 6 pm at the rate of fifty (50 cents) per hour. We recommend the use of kiosks which are compatible with smart cards as was recommended by the parking commission.
- During this phase, we will approach the council with a plan to sell permits in the upper floor of the Goecke parking deck. The funds from those permits would be designated to the bonds and upkeep of the Goecke parking deck.

Phase 4—Pay for Parking on the streets in the westerly section of the downtown

At the end of a one year evaluation period, charge for parking on the streets in westerly section of the city.

Phase 5—time to be determined-- Begin charging for parking in the lots in the Easterly end (Merrimack street) end of the downtown.

This area presents its own unique challenges and opportunities. We will present a separate plan for that area at a later date.

Plan Details

The following are more details of the recommendations:

Residential Permits:

Residents would be issued non-exclusive parking permits to park in various designated parking spaces in the lots at night and during the day. The permits would not allow residential on street parking.

Our consultant did not recommend a price for the permits. We suggest \$25 per month.

The residential permit would entitle only vehicles with residential permits affixed to their windshields to park in designated residential permit spots. This would be enforcing 24 hours per day.

After conferring with our consultant, we strongly recommend the use of residential permits, rather than the use of smart cards for residents.

A permit is not a leased space and would not guarantee any resident a spot—only that there would be the same number of spots as there are permits.

Details of Permitting:

Permits would be on a first come first served basis. Those who did not receive permits would remain on the waiting list. As soon as someone gave up a permit the person on the waiting list would be offered the permit. One permit would be issued per household and proof of residency would be required. Preference would be given to owner/occupants. Permits would need to be permanently affixed to a designated windshield location.

The permits would be issued for six months. The demand for permits will be reassessed semiannually to determine if there was the proper number of permits.

There is no way of determining at this time the demand for permits. Since each permit space is a space that could be used by someone else, it is our recommendation that we start with a limited number of permits—we recommend 50—to determine the level of need. If there is demand, then we will recommend additional permit locations. Starting with a small number of permits enables us to gauge, with the market, the number of people who need permits, where they live and the characteristics of the demand. We will outline to the council during the hearings where we propose putting the additional spots if they are needed.

Parking Improvement District Funds:

Although revenue is not a primary goal of the plan, we estimate that the city will generate \$15,000 in permit income from phases 1 and 2 of the plan. We estimate that we will generate an additional \$138,000 in revenue from charging in the lots under phase 3 of the plan.

Our proposal is that this income be used to maintain, improve security and beautify the area where we charge for parking. We believe that this will help to sell the later phases of the plan.

Based on the work of the Parking Commission, we estimate the signage costs to be \$8,000. The cost of kiosks is estimated to be \$65,000. Annual kiosk maintenance costs should not exceed \$10,000. The balance of the revenue should be adequate to cover enforcement. This plan is self financing during the first year. Thereafter, it should generate sufficient revenue to finance additional phased implementation.

These amounts do not include the substantial income that will be, generated from ticketing. Parking consultants estimate that the income from tickets is usually double the income from the permits and meters—for total gross revenue of approximately \$450,000 from this phase of the plan alone. Ticketing revenue is general fund revenue.

Evaluation at the End of the Pilot Period:

Our recommendation is that the entire parking plan be sunsetted and have to be re-voted by the council at the end of a three year period.

I look forward to working with the council on this and to hearing your comments and recommendations. I suggest you may want to send this proposal either to a committee or to a Mayor Council conference for a detailed discussion.

Very truly yours,

James J. Fiorentini
Mayor

Notes for press, key elements of plan

1. Program is for west end of downtown only
2. No meters on Merrimack Street
3. Permits for residential tenants
4. Program is implemented in phases