

TOWN OF SOUTHTON
PARKING AUTHORITY
Regular Meeting
February 7, 2008

A regular meeting of the Parking Authority of the Town of Southington was held on February 7, 2008 at 4:30 pm in the Town Council Chambers of the Southington Town Hall at 75 Main Street, Southington, Connecticut. The meeting was called to order by Rebecca Davis, Chairperson.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was recited by everyone in attendance.

Roll Call

Mr. Salmeri, Ms. Zommer, Ms. Zoni and Ms. Davis, Chair.

Absent: Mr. Myers

A quorum was determined.

Rebecca Davis, Chair, presiding:

Approval of Minutes of January 3, 2008.

Ms. Zommer made a motion to approve the Minutes as presented. Ms. Zoni seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Police Communications

The Chair reported that Sgt. DePalma would not be able to present at this evening's meeting. However, he will be available for the March meeting and it will be helpful because it will be prior to our spring walk. A lot of information we've been talking about.

Public Communications

Mike Domain: 58 Doral Lane. I went to the last Town Council meeting and brought the overnight parking situation up to them. There seems to be three main concerns.

The liability never really came up. So, the two big concerns were snow removal and how many people we're really talking about this affecting.

My opinion is the majority of the Town Council is in favor of doing something with the overnight parking. I think we all agree that we definitely need it.

(Hand out passed around)

In the hand out I've identified where I think we can do it. The Groggy Frog lot. Town owned, liability is not an issue because it's Town owned. The CBT lot. There's plenty of parking spots back there. I highlighted one of the areas.

Right now there's a pile of snow taking up six spots. The Chair interjected she has addressed that.

To limit the amount of people this will affect, let's identify what downtown really means. I'd make the argument anywhere the brick sidewalks go, that's downtown. If we limit this to downtown only, we're right back to that 6,8,10 spots. It's not as big of a problem as everybody things.

Expenses incurred by property owners in the downtown area were noted: expense of brick sidewalks.

Why can't we just consider downtown it's own district? This permit to have overnight parking in these lots I've highlighted to say where they can park, this is a privilege for people that live within the downtown area, only.

I thought this would be a no-brainer. People live down there and we've got to give them a place to park if we want to attract better people, increase the property values. There are no options for some landowners down there and we have to provide parking for them if we want to continue having them put money into their buildings and continuing to attract people who will support the whole downtown project.

Can we do this in a trial basis? Let's try it for six months.

I have pricing for the stickers to put in their window -- Overnight Parking Permit. I have pricing on a sign. We can sink it in a 5-gallon bucket of cement. Permit Parking Town Residents Only by Permit. Put them up at 7, 8, 10 spots, whatever you deem is enough. I'll volunteer to review the applications or hand out the permits.

I've tried to identify how many properties that don't have an option to park. I don't think you would qualify for a permit if it is easier to park over there or more convenient. That's not what this is about. This is based on necessity, number one, we don't have another option.

Look at it that way, take a look at what the district would be, what the area that qualifies for this is, and if we had to put the brick sidewalks in, that's an easy one to say, yah, that's clearly what everybody is imagining as the downtown area. That's my opinion.

Discussion.

Ms. Zoni asked how many residents over the age of 16? The Speaker said he didn't have that number. Ms. Zoni said that it is a guess at 6, 8 or 10 parking spaces. The Speaker said talking to people down there, it seems to be pretty close to 8 to 10 spots. If we need to have an exact number, I would take your direction. Ten would be sufficient.

These meetings are only once a month. Every month the police do ticket and it keeps on going.

The biggest thing I took away from the Town Council meeting is this Board has absolutely has the authority to rule on this and make the decision and make this happen.

Mr. Salmeri advised it is on the Agenda under Old Business and we're going to discuss it tonight.

Joseph LaPorte: I echo everything the fellow before me said. I do own a building down there and I was here about three years ago. I'll echo everything he said.

Art Secondo: 1048 South Main Street, Plantsville. Mike did bring his concerns to the Town Council meeting. I can say the consensus of the Council was, it is in your court.

Informally, I can tell you they weren't too happy with the lots that Mike had made out on the parking lot behind the old Popular. On the other hand, this is your call.

We're looking forward to the parking study which we approved funds for. The Council consensus was they agreed there is a problem. There is a lot of sympathy for the people who have no place to park.

Discussion of the Town acquiring a lease for parking on South Center Street, adjacent to the Rails to Trail near factory square, all of the way from Testa's Restaurant to where Peck Stowe is.

The problem is there are tenants in heartbreak hotel that park across the street. There'll be 4 or 5 cars there and if we do not allow them to park there, they'll be scampering all over Town for a place to park.

This is your authority to do what you feel is necessary.

I told Mike I'd be here because I am sympathetic to their plight. However, I don't think the parking lot near the Groggy Frog is adequate. It's a small lot to begin with. It's used by the Sons of Italy Club and patrons of the bar who park there more than two hours. We don't want to open a can of worms in that lot.

I don't want to get too much into the Riccio Parking Lot. I've always said there is plenty of parking in this Town. I don't want to really blame Branford Hall tonight. I'll blame them later. There is still work to be done there.

I compliment your on the progress you've already done. The Parking Authority is a very important clog in the machinery here in what's growing downtown.

I'm happy to see the sign at Riccio Way proclaiming that lot as a municipal lot. I'm happy to hear we will not be using private vendors for every little thing that has to be done. There is great progress.

I'm only here to support Mike in theory and the other landlords. There is limited parking on that end of the Town. My only personal suggestion was you try it for a year. He has a good idea with the stickers and so forth.

My suggestion is the rear of the Riccio Parking Lot to the extreme back of it, that we give a one-year trial basis until we do get that parking area near South Center. Hopefully, this will come down to ten spots.

When we lease the property near Factory Square, you'll have more parking and you can make the decision on what to do with the cars that are there now.

Discussion.

Discussion of the pending parking study.

We want to be business friendly and people friendly.

Mat Florian: 506 Mount Vernon Road. I had a couple of quick things.

On the overnight parking, I agree there's a need for that, also, however this has been here many, many times. Historically it was businesses coming in for overnight parking. There is a need and it's not just residential. I find it interesting there is an uprising now for that and it's a legitimate need, but it's also a need for business, too.

Discussion.

Maybe if you start small, 5 or 6 spaces, and find a spot.

For the Council to come and say put them in the Riccio lot and we'll blame Branford Hall later, I kind of take offense to that. Those buildings were really the engine that drove Renaissance. I'm hoping he means let's put them at the Riccio lot, after 5:00.

If you tag ten spaces, does that mean they're tagged 24-7? Or does that mean they're tagged at night. If it's at night, I think it's a brilliant idea. There's more than enough there at night.

(Comments from the audience that's what it is for, at night, only.)

The Speaker said he has to come to meetings to hear these things and I am down here 24-7 and I get all the phone calls. You get some, but I get all of them about parking.

It seems to me the South Center lot would be better because that's where the residents are.

I'm glad I was at this meeting. This is news. Discussion.

The Two Hour Parking behind Abby, that's an ongoing saga. I did take some of your advice. I added one more handicapped in my space so almost the entire front line of those 20 spots are handicapped. We also painted them yellow so it's visible those are one hour parking spaces. I'll keep you posted on that.

If you do something with the overnight, you might want to consider adding business, too.

Commissioner Communications

The Chair reported it's kind of been an impression that the Parking Authority has been dealing with overnight parking for the last two years, even ten. At our meeting last month was the first time we really go this to us. We haven't been dealing with it and you'll see when we talk about overnight parking, I've got

a lot of stuff on it in this last 30 days. We have only been discussing this for the last 30 days, for the record.

She did speak with the highway department about clearing the snow from the spaces. Hopefully, that'll be done soon. I did watch the Town Council meeting a few times.

Protocol for the municipal lots. If we get a call, we should contact the Town Manager or the Town Attorney's office and they'll contact the highway department.

She got a call from Mike Domain advising he was going to go before the Council and explained what he was going to do.

I gave everybody the notice of the Freedom of Information meeting on February 21st at 7:00. If you can go, I think that would be great.

Mat's letter to his tenants I did distribute.

Submission of Bills and Payments

Stenographer's bill in the amount of \$106.00. Ms. Zoni made a motion to pay the bill. Ms. Zommer seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Old Business

1. Budget

The Chair submitted the budget as discussed at the last meeting. Joe added a little bit for lot preventative. It's my understanding he has until February 25th to complete and then we'll find out what happened to our budget.

2. Parking Study

The Chair referred to a letter she distributed indicating that we are supporting that parking study. We wanted to include it in ours but we went and did it with the Town Planner's Office. Everything, hopefully, will shake out well with that.

3. Rules and Regulations

The Chair noted the changes. Everyone had a chance to review.

Mr. Salmeri made a motion to approve the changes and set the Rules and Regulations in place at this time. Ms. Zommer seconded.

(Motion passed 4 to 0 on a roll call vote.)

4. Overnight Parking

The Chair started by saying she has thought about and researched this for the last 30 days. This is like the biggest issue we have faced since I've been aboard. It's been our rule, black and white, no overnight parking.

It is unfortunate that some tenants in the downtown area and Plantsville --- our municipal parking spaces aren't just in downtown Southington when we're talking about pavers. We're talking about Riccio Way and we are talking about the Quinpiac Lot. We're talking about the Plantsville lot, as well.

It's unfortunate some tenants have entered into a lease and parking spaces aren't included. The thing I'm having a hard time with is it's just a handful of people. I don't know where the 6 or 8 people have come from, but there is rentals. There's rentals on Merrell Avenue, Oak Street, in downtown Plantsville. So, the 6 to 8 people, I just think it's much more far-reaching than 6 to 8 people.

A few scenarios we have to consider --- I want us to be as thoughtful about this as possible --- that I can think of and there may be a lot more, but one is someone purchases a building, does a great job renovating it downtown. Has a storefront and a rental unit above. But it doesn't have any parking.

They'll come to the Parking Authority and ask for overnight parking.

Merchant B purchases a building and renovates it. Pretty much has put his life savings into making this business work. Lives in a rental with one car. He now has a van that's crucial to his business.

They'll come and ask for overnight parking.

Merchant C has a 24-hour business and they need somewhere to park for their personnel over the evening.

Then we might be presented with a scenario where Merchant D purchases a building on Queen Street. He renovates the building and when he goes to open, he's hit with he has to create parking before he can open his business. He's hit with tens of thousands

of dollars for his parking. Not only does he have to create it, he has to pave it, plow it and maintain it.

That might be an argument that's going to come before us.

I think we need to identify exactly how many tenants are going to ask for this. We really have no way of knowing. Once we start, it's not just going to be tenants; it's going to be merchants that'll ask us for this, as well.

We're hoping the parking study is going to help us with that.

If it is approved, how many spaces are we going to need and is it 24-7 or does it just begin at 2:30 when overnight parking isn't available?

If it's 24-7, when the parker arrives home from work at 6:00 and his space is taken because we know how busy the downtown area is at 6:00, he might have to wait until 2:00 for that person to come out of that space.

The other thing is compensation. It's a Town parking lot. I would gather there'd have to be some compensation. How do we determine that? There's a lot of stuff we have to consider.

Discussion.

I don't think it's a no-brainer. It's absolutely not a no-brainer. I guarantee you there's going to be more and more that will come besides the 6 or 8 people.

I did meet with the Town Attorney. Joe and I met with Chief Daly. The Town Attorney is not for this at all. It's more than just liability. It has to do with his negotiation of leases and he's worried about that.

Discussion.

I did call West Hartford, Newington and Farmington. In West Hartford, not a dime of taxpayers' money goes to municipal parking. The municipal parking in downtown West Hartford is created by what they charge to park. It's the maintenance, the staff of 50 people. It's the police. No overnight parking.

There's no overnight parking in Newington. They have one municipal lot.

Farmington didn't call me back and I don't think they have any municipal lot.

Mr. Salmeri noted when we met with Chief Daly; one thing that came up was enforcement. Two hour parking, handicapped

parking. I agree with you it's not a no-brainer. There are several facets we have to look at.

The parking study we will need to help us do our job.

I don't want to see us have a knee jerk reaction and put something in place and then just have to turn around and change it again. If we're going to do it, let's do it right.

The signage (24-7 or a certain period of time) seems problematic. We'll have to figure out how we're going to manage that. Enforcement has to be considered for this specific need parking. Just one more officer for this specific need would be another \$100,000/year minimum.

Discussion.

For example, what do we do if someone parks in my space that's tagged for me and it's during the hours I'm supposed to use it? These are problems that will be created. How're we going to enforce it? Waiting for an officer to come out depending on where we put the spots could be conflicts created where a police presence is necessary.

Discussion.

It's important we do the study, look at this seriously. It's something we have to look at but we have to take our time and be very prudent on how we go forward with it with all the information gathered we can possibly get before making a final decision.

I personally don't think it's a good idea to do it on a temporary basis at this point.

Ms. Zoni agreed we shouldn't do it in a big hurry. I did a drive through of our lots to see the usage and how many people were filling the spaces. From Wednesday night to Saturday night, you aren't parking downtown until very late. All the handicapped are full and most of the regular are full.

Discussion.

If we hurry up and rush we are going to have people in those parking places that are at the businesses and then when is a tenant going to come out or a business person come out and put their vehicle in. It's not reasonable at this time.

Discussion.

Different scenarios were discussed.

Ms. Zommer agreed. Being an apartment building owner and dealing with tenants and assigned parking, it's a big problem. You are absolutely right about someone parking in the designated spot. What if you work nights and they need the parking in the

daytime. It is municipal parking and I do think we need more input from people who aren't business or property owners in the downtown. What about the taxpayers paying for the municipal lots? Maybe they have some thoughts.

Discussion.

Ms. Zoni pointed out you if do temporary, you're set a precedent. Once you set a precedent, it's hard to go back.

Discussion.

Public input session for a maximum of 30 minutes at the beginning of the next meeting was discussed. Ms. Zommer made that motion to have the public input session regarding overnight parking for 30 minutes before the next meeting. Mr. Salmeri seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Mr. Salmeri brought up parking waivers. We really don't have a handle on how many spaces we have during specific periods of time depending on what kind of businesses we have in the downtown area.

Also, I like what was presented. But to do it on a temporary basis, we don't to set a precedent. There is a lot to look at before we take the next step.

West Hartford was discussed.

New Business

Music on the Green

Jerry Limmer, 40 Butternut Lane. I'm here representing Parks & Recreation. I'm asking for a repeat of all the years behind this for our storage trailer for Music on the Green.

It's a vital part of our whole program. We need it. We're asking to put it exactly where it has been the last 9 or 10 years.

Dates: May 13th, 2008 thru October 12th, 2008.

The handicapped parking space move was discussed. The Building Inspector seemed to be the point guy for the Town and he said the law states the closest most available spot to the business. I'm assuming they mean Bontera and the bank. But it's not the safest spot.

Discussion.

If they put the handicapped spot at the bump out where the ramp is for the restaurant, it would be ideal. Or they could join it with the other two handicapped spots that are already in

the Bank of American parking lot in the front row or in the second row. There's alternatives.

Mr. Masci advised after a meeting with Town Officials, we came to agreement that it could go in the second row.
Discussion.

The Chair said because of freestanding signage, the recommendation of next to the other two would be better.
Discussion.

Importance of the trailer for the Music on the Green program and more importantly the Apple Harvest Festival was explained.

The two issues are the approval of their equipment and what we're going to do with the handicapped spot, noted Mr. Salmeri.

Mr. Salmeri made a motion to approve their use of the lot as we always have in the past.

Mr. Florian gave a history on the handicapped spot location. He indicated this Board was notified before the paving he was requesting that. You were notified in writing. The Chair said she never saw that. Mr. Florian said he verbally communicated and put it in writing that's exactly where Jim Butler wanted it. Mr. Florian said he delivered a letter to a meeting here. We might want to look in the Minutes. We did talk about it in the lot before it was paved.

(End of Tape #1, Side A)
(Beginning of Tape #1, side B)

Jim Butler had a concern with the drive thru; it kind of boxed the handicapped people out. We asked the Chief about the street, just a little up from the Masonic where it seemed to be a safe, good spot. It didn't get a real warm reception, but that still might be a good idea.

Pushing it back to where they were isn't a good option because the people that have to get into the corner building, it just gets farther and farther away. Maybe if we did a field walk out there and tried to come up with another solution.

It was noted the Commission is going to set at the next meeting a date for a field walk.

The 98 Main Lot was discussed. It's confusing there.
Discussion.

A handicapped space in that little bump out, it doesn't seem that it would be safe. It's so congested there and it wouldn't be practical for the way the tenants are using the building. That's the worse spot.

Discussion.

Apple Way is not a horrible option.

Ms. Zoni said she has spoken to people on the Council about this. I know there's been some discussion about the handicapped spaces with the Disabilities Commission as well as with the Downtown Merchants Association. Each group is also discussed on street handicapped parking. We need input from all of them and maybe we would request that, also.

Mr. Salmeri repeated his motion: I make a motion that we approve the use of the Fleet Lot as in the past, May 13th to October 12, 2008 for Music on the Green. Ms. Zommer seconded.

The Chair asked if the Parks Department could put up the handicapped sign when it is determined where we want it to go. Joe LaPorte and Bill Masci agreed they could do that.

Mr. Salmeri added to the motion that they Parks Department would replace the handicapped sign at a later date when we determine where the safest place to put that spot would be. Ms. Zommer seconded.

(Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.)

Italian American Festival

Bill DellaVecchia, 1163 West Center Street. The Italian American Festival is scheduled for July 25, 26 and 27. As in the past three years, we're looking to use the lot that's at the corner of Center Street and North Liberty for handicapped parking during the event, as we did in the past.

In addition, there maybe a need for the carnival to be placed in that lot.

Discussion.

We will provide a map in the future if in fact we talk about putting the carnival there so you'll see it's similar to what the Apple Festival has to do when they use the back as to how that's going to be set up and what spots would be necessary to take up and also the handicapped.

You'd be able then to inform the tenants in the area as to what's going on.

Ms. Zoni questioned handicapped and carnival in the same lot.

The Chair said she talked with the Town Attorney because those two lots are leased. Ms. Perillo is for behind the Groggy Frog and then Massimo's. I'm sure you don't have any objection to working with the Town Attorney to get permission from the owners to use that lot? Mr. Della Vecchia said he would check with the Town Attorney as to what's going on.

Discussion.

Mr. Salmeri made a motion that we approve the usage of the North Liberty Lot and the Groggy Frog lot (Perillo lot & Massimo) with the stipulation that any approvals that are necessary from the private owners that lease the lots to the Town be granted first. Ms. Zommer seconded.

Ms. Zoni again said she was concerned about if you have kids walking to little kiddy rides, I'm concerned about the handicapped being the same and vehicles moving in that lot while there are children walking. I'd rather see the handicapped go somewhere else.

Discussion.

The Chair advised that the Parking Authority approves it and the ZBA are the ones that set it up.

Discussion.

Mr. Della Vecchia noted if that happen, we would have temporary fencing and with the carnival being to the front, you would go into the driveway next to Massimo's with a fencing that went across and then have the handicapped parking. There would be a separation between vehicles and pedestrian traffic.

Ms. Zommer noted for the record, just these different functions coming up like Music on the Green and the festival, shows how our parking areas are used. And, how overnight parking in these areas might really create a problem.

Mr. Salmeri agreed that is one more thing we need to consider.

(Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.)

Mid-Winter Lot Cleanup

The Chair said the usual big lot cleanup is April to May. There's a lot of activity downtown and there are some lots that do have trash and Mr. Meade does the cleanup of trash and debris on a monthly basis up until October.

I thought we might want to enact that right away. There are some lots that do need touch ups right now. Not our spring cleanup, but something addressed with now with the trash.

Discussion.

Ms. Zommer made a motion that we have a monthly cleanup. Ms. Zoni seconded. (Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.)

Adjournment

Mr. Salmeri made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Zommer seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 5:32 o'clock,
p.m.)

Rebecca Davis, Chair
Parking Authority