



Legislation Text

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TITLE:

Discussion of a Downtown Parking Summit on Shared Parking

PURPOSE: The purpose of this item is to update the Board on the comments and outcomes of the Downtown Parking Summit meeting that was held on January 31, 2014.

DEPARTMENT: Economic & Community Development, Planning

CONTACT INFORMATION: Annette Stone (918-7319), Trish McGuire (918-7327)

INFORMATION: Last Fall, Town Staff was receiving reports of concerns from a few local businesses regarding violations of the two hour parking limits in the downtown area. These businesses requested that the Town enforce the two hour limit. In addition, the Town was taking “soft enforcement measures” to discourage park-n-walk users in Town lots due to the new pay for Park and Ride lots. These enforcement efforts fleshed out an underlying issue of a need for employee parking in the downtown.

In an effort to better manage the Town’s parking resources, the issue of how to deal with the needs of longer-term parking for business employees arises. Some businesses have requested parking permits from the Town to allow all-day parking for their employees in public lots. This raises several questions including 1) do the employees pay for the parking permit, 2) if not, and it is a free parking permit, this is in direct competition with paid lease lots around town and creates no incentive for employers/employees to pay for parking, 3) if it is paid, how to administer such a program. These are all general questions that arise when considering the Town’s position on providing parking for private businesses and it employees.

In an effort to open conversations and facilitate discussions, the Town Staff hosted a Parking Summit at the Century Center on January 31, 2014. There were three 1-1/2 hour sessions where property and business owners were invited to come and discuss parking needs and concerns. There was an effort made to match up those with parking needs with those with parking surplus.

Unfortunately, during the summit itself, there were very few connections that were made. Staff did capture all the comments and they are compiled in a list (Attachment E) and categorized into the following categories; Data, Pricing, Management, Management/Parking Plan, and Behavior/Perception. These comments will be useful moving forward with the Town’s parking plan scheduled to begin this fall.

As an interim step, while the Town works toward a comprehensive parking plan, town staff is requesting the Board to consider allowing staff to assess existing Town leased lots to determine to what extent they are used by employees or customers and consider leasing spaces to employers/employees during employee peak demand, which is Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. This would leave the Towns parking lots open and available for nights and weekends free to the public.

A current inventory of public parking spaces is provided in Attachment B.

A preliminary survey of employee parking needs for downtown businesses has provided the following information. (Full survey results are available in Attachment C). Twenty-eight downtown businesses (including two Town of Carrboro departments) responded to the survey. Of those responding, 20 stated that they provided on-site parking for their employees. Of the 8 that did not provide on-site parking, 3 stated that they had shared parking agreements with another business. 7 of the 8 businesses that do not provide on-site parking for employees utilize public parking lots for their employees. The total number of employees reported to park off-site was 94, of which 64 reported to use public parking. A map of the businesses that responded to the survey is included as Attachment D.

FISCAL & STAFF IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact related to the discussion of this topic. Staff impact will vary based on what direction is given by the Board of Aldermen. The Town could realize a financial gain if some of the Town lots could be leased to private employees/employers. Implementation and management of a parking permit system will take considerable staff time that is currently not planned.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Board of Aldermen consider adopting the attached resolution.