



## Legislation Text

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### **TITLE:**

Update of Downtown Employee Parking Issues and Interim Solutions

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this item is to update the Board on staff's findings regarding interim solutions for employee parking in the downtown.

**DEPARTMENT:** Economic & Community Development, Planning

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

**INFORMATION:** *The following information was reported to the Board at the April 15, 2014 meeting - 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 its 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 Town's 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.*

**UPDATED INFORMATION:** The staff has been discussing two options that the Board could exercise in the interim to help with the immediate problem of employee parking. The first option was discussed at the April 15<sup>th</sup> meeting and that is for the town to sub-lease out spaces in the Laurel and Weaver Street lots. Laurel has 20 spaces and Weaver Street has 32 spaces. For this option, the board might consider subleasing all 20 of the Laurel Street spaces and 25 of the Weaver Street spaces leaving 7 paved spaces for time-limited customer parking in the Weaver lot. The current rate for daytime parking being charged in the Downtown is approximately \$300.00/yearly.

The Laurel and Weaver lots could be offered to businesses in Carrboro for their employee parking only. The Town this year paid \$4,811.00 (the annual tax bill) on the Laurel lot. If the Town leased the 20 spaces at \$300/yearly, plus \$50 for cost of signage we would gross \$6,100.00. For the Weaver lot the annual tax bill was \$8,434.00. If the Town leased 25 spaces at \$300/yearly plus \$50 for the cost of signage, we would net \$7,625.00. These lots could be self-policed and violators being reported to the CPD and tickets issued.

The biggest challenge with this option in the Laurel lot is the conflict with the Wednesday Farmer's Market and the loss of overflow parking from Town Hall during special events. The Weaver Street lot is used by the Recreation and Parks staff along with the S. Greensboro lot. Displaced town staff would need to park exclusively in the Roberson lot. The question of Recreation and Parks staff parking at the Century Center lot on Weaver and Greensboro also came up during the April 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. It has been the policy of the Recreation and Parks staff to not park in this lot.

A second option that the Board of Aldermen could consider is to use Fidelity Street for permit-only, on-street parking, Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The street could hold an estimated 100 +/- vehicles. Permits would be issued to Carrboro business owners for use by their employees only. Parking would be on a first come, first serve basis. Potential revenue that could be realized from issuing permits is \$20,000 (100 permits at \$200/year). There are a number of challenges associated with exercising this option.

Allowing on-street parking on Fidelity Street would impact the bike lanes. Fidelity is a low traffic volume street and cyclists often utilize the traffic lane due to the width of the road and low traffic volume. The width of the street also encourages motorist to speed, therefore on-street parking may act as a traffic calming measure. The Town could paint the bicycle markings in the road, to increase safety. However, on-street parking does affect the Town's overall number miles of bike lanes. Additional signage would be required to direct parking. The estimated cost of the additional signage is approximately \$800.00 and street markings would cost an estimated \$5000. This cost would be offset by the fees of the permits to park.

Enforcement of parking in general continues to be a challenge overall. One implication is that with access to

“designated employee parking” and revenues from permit fees the Town could do more aggressive enforcement in the core lots around S. Greensboro and Main Street. Other challenges with Fidelity Street include conflict with the Wednesday Farmer’s Market parking and getting employees to use the parking and walk or bike to their workplace, particularly employees that work on the east side of Greensboro Street.

Ultimately Fidelity Street, and other on-street parking opportunities, should be studied as a component of the upcoming parking study as well as the overall question of long-term versus short-term parking. As previously stated, these two options are being discussed by staff. Any recommendation from staff would be to only consider these as pilot projects to fully evaluate the impacts. However, at this time staff would like to continue to evaluate these two options during the summer break and return to the Board with these options in August.

**FISCAL & STAFF IMPACT:** Fiscal impacts are expressed in the above narrative. The full implications in increased enforcement are not known at this time.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends that the Board accept the report and allow staff additional time to present options to the Board after the summer break.