

CITY OF LACONIA - CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
Government Operations & Ordinances
March 9, 2020
6:00 P.M.

3/9/2020 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bownes called the meeting to order at the above date and time.

2. RECORDING SECRETARY

Cheryl Hebert, City Clerk

3. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Hebert called the roll with the following Councilors in attendance: Bruce Cheney, David Bownes, and Tony Felch

Chairman Bownes noted all three (3) Councilors were in attendance and a quorum was established.

4. STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Scott Myers, City Manager

Glenn Smith, Finance Director

5. GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ORDINANCES (Bownes (Chair), Felch, Cheney)

5.A. Paid Parking Proposal for Downtown

Chairman Bownes opened the meeting by explaining he has been an advocate for some sort of paid parking in the downtown area for several years, but he is also open to other ideas. The idea of this meeting is to make a decision to bring to the Council as to what direction should be taken. Councilor Bownes' concept is to keep Main Street, Pleasant Street, and Beacon Streets East and West to two hour parking and do not meter them. Then, the municipal parking lot (at City Hall) would be metered or permitted, and the parking lots next to the Congregational Church and the municipal parking lot on Beacon Street West and the area behind the train station would be metered or permitted parking. There was a proposal in the amount of \$50 but Councilor Bownes is not locked in to that amount. Councilor Bownes explained that any property tax payer is paying for the maintenance of these parking lots and primarily the people that are getting the benefits of this are the institutions such as the Post Office, Genesis, and Healthlink. Councilor Bownes doesn't want this to make things more difficult to the downtown area. He wants to attract people to downtown.

City Manager Myers reviewed the Downtown Parking Proposal that himself and Mayor Engler put together that had been previously discussed.

Councilor Felch explained that most of the feedback he received from the downtown business owners was they don't want a pay to park system and they feel it would deter people from coming to the area. Councilor Felch walked the downtown and presented a questionnaire to the business owners to fill out. All of the questionnaires that were filled out were submitted as part of the record. Councilor Felch posed the question of what will prevent people from parking in the two hour spots that Councilor Bownes was suggesting and going out and moving their cars every two hours like they do now.

Councilor Bownes explained he understands the question and realizes that people will figure out how to work the system. He also stated that Laconia is one of the only Cities that doesn't have some kind of a paid parking system and those communities that do have a paid parking system seem to survive.

Councilor Felch expressed his opinion that those places that do have a paid parking system survive because those places are thriving and all of their store fronts are full and people are always there. Councilor Felch says this paid parking system shouldn't happen until the downtown is thriving and full.

Councilor Cheney tends to agree with Councilor Felch that a paid parking proposal right now may be premature. The Downtown area needs to get back to thriving and then paid parking can be reassessed.

Chairman Bownes opened this meeting up to the public at 6:13 pm

Brad Kirby - Owns a shop on Main Street. He agrees with waiting until the Downtown area is flourishing before any paid parking comes in to play. Stated he has lost employees and customers due to the time limited parking. He also explained how he has watched the parking attendants place a mark on the ground around a tire, that car leaves and another car pulls into that same parking spot and because that second cars tire line up with the chalk mark, they are given a ticket after only being in that spot for ten minutes. Mr. Kirby expressed he thinks the limited time frame should be removed or at the least the parking tickets gone away. He stated it is all killing the businesses downtown. His employees have already stated if they have to pay to come to work that they will have to find another job.

Mark Condodemetraky - Owner of a Downtown business. Mr. Condodemetraky applauds Councilor Bownes for bringing this topic forward even though it is controversial. He is not opposed to paid parking but there needs to be a long term plan. Mr. Condodemetraky explained the City doesn't even have a management plan for the Colonial yet so until there is an actually long term plan on how to address parking, then this subject needs to be put on hold.

Kim Terrio from Penny Pitou Travel - Spoke against the paid parking proposal and it would be a detriment to the small business owners and their employees. She stated her employees can't afford to pay the proposed fee to park to work and as a small business she can't afford to pay for her employees to park as well. Ms. Terrio mentioned public transportation would help with the parking problems.

Jason Ganong - building owner in the downtown area - He thinks within the next 5-10 years, the downtown area will be flourishing. By implementing a paid parking proposal it will cause more businesses in the downtown area to close. The unit Mr. Ganong owns, houses four (4) residential units and four (4) business. The residential units have been all redone and young professionals live in them and are shopping and attending the local businesses. Mr. Ganong explained that it would be a punishment for these same young professionals to have to pay to park where they live and shop.

Tara Shore (Belknap Mill) - Read a prepared statement and later emailed it to the Clerk for the record.

Brandon (Fit Focus) - Fit Focus has anywhere from 30 - 50 employees and with the proposed rate of \$50 per month per person, Fit Focus would have to pay anywhere from \$18,000 to \$30,000 a year for his employees to park. Brandon thinks this would discourage business in the downtown area.

Larry Frates - Why does this have to be done now? Councilor Felch does not think this should be done now.

Jon Moriarity - Has been following the parking in the downtown area since 2011. Mr. Moriarity took it upon himself to make a spreadsheet of some statistics of the parking in the downtown area. He

explained there are approximately 1,071 parking spaces downtown. He explained that it takes him 45 minutes to walk and count the parking spaces downtown, therefore he knows the amount of occupied spaces will change within that time. After Mr. Moriarty explained after having done many counts and studies, at the peak parking time in the downtown, only 60% of the parking spaces are being used, which tells him that there isn't a parking problem. Mr. Moriarty showed to the committee an aerial photograph of downtown Laconia, and he has counted how many footsteps it takes him to walk that area which is roughly 198 to 200 steps on average. He then began to compare the size of the Tilton Walmart and a close parking space at that location. He stated that the Tilton Walmart and its 4 acres that it sits on is roughly the same size as the downtown area shown in his picture. So the point he was trying to make is that there is a parking perception not a parking problem. Mr. Moriarty is happy to discuss his research with anybody that would like to.

Chairman Bownes closed the public portion of this meeting at 6:43 pm.

Councilor Felch moved to recommend to the Council that this item be removed from the agenda, seconded by Councilor Cheney; ***the motion passed with all in favor.***

6. **Any other business that may come before the Council**

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to come before the committee and hearing no objection, Chairman Bownes adjourned the meeting at 6:47 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

David Bownes, Chair