

METUCHEN PARKING AUTHORITY
MARCH 19, 2013 MINUTES

PRESENT:

Commissioners: Len Roseman, Rick Dyas, John DeFoe and Sean Massey
Borough Council Liaison: Jay Muldoon
Chamber Liaison:
Legal Counsel:
Executive Director: Thomas Crownover

The regular order of business was suspended upon motion of Mr. Dyas, second by Mr. Massey and unanimous approval. A discussion with Mr. Thomas Brown of Nelson / Nygaard, transportation consultant, followed.

Mr. Roseman offered various parking studies and the master plan to Mr. Brown for his use. Mr. Crownover would provide a digital copy of the Parking Matters document.

Mr. Brown brought a handout of a sample plan produced by his firm. Mr. Dyas asked if Marquette, Michigan, the sample community, was engaged in development when the transportation plan was produced. Mr. Brown said that Marquette was considering a parking structure. Management policy is the focus for Nelson / Nygaard. Proper Management of on street parking is needed to make off street function properly. Mr. Brown offered the example of a person seeking Main Street parking who would not park in a deck even with plenty of available space. Mr. Dyas asked how on street parking is managed? Mr. Roseman noted that there are 200 spaces on Main Street. Dynamic meter rates don't seem to be appropriate for such a limited supply. Mr. Dyas pointed out the residences on Main Street with people living above stores. Mr. Brown responded that meter hours should follow demand. The right solutions are not apparent at this time. He could only advise what other cities have done. Ann Arbor, Michigan with upscale restaurants worried that charging for parking after 6:00 PM would turn away customers. Political struggle was involved but charging for parking after six made sense for them to free up on street parking for restaurants.

Mr. Brown joined his firm in 2006. They are strictly transportation planners who see it as a means to an end. How do you plan your downtown without anxiety about the shopping mall? They look at existing assets. Using less parking frees up space for development. Kiss and ride drop offs were raised by Mr. Dyas. Many towns are swamped by parking. How accommodating is the downtown to walking and bicycles? All the different aspects of parking are looked at: residential, business, commercial and how the current system is performing. Measures of performance will be provided. Scope of the study will include the existing system. Weekdays at midday and weekend nights are often the busiest. Complaints about lack of parking may reveal weaknesses in the current system. Mr. DeFoe studied by personal observation the availability of parking during the lunch hour. He found there were many available spaces. Mr. Brown talked about way finding and alleviating the frustration of endlessly driving around to find the nearest space to a destination. But drowning people in free parking doesn't work in most downtowns.

Mr. Roseman asked for information on technology such as multi-space meters and credit card use. Aspen, Colorado's parking manager consults with Mr. Brown's firm on technology issues. Pay by phone was noted.

Public input is valuable to avoid missing useful information. Focus groups are useful. NJ Transit and other parties of interest would be contacted. Strategies involving privately owned lots and incentivizing underutilized strategies would be considered. Walk-ability from nearby neighborhoods and whether people drive from place to place after parking in town would be examined.

Outlining short term gains and changing the transportation culture would be looked at. Mr. DeFoe asked about future changes and how they would be dealt with. Mr. Dyas stated that Pearl development is not about a parking problem but about the best use of this asset. He also said it would be good to anticipate likely changes and noted the lack of apartment units for young people to stay in town. Mr. Muldoon said he was in favor of a transportation plan because of future problems that would otherwise develop. Mr. Brown had said that you want to get to the place where you don't have to think about parking when you go to town. Mr. Brown stressed to clients that the millennial generation is not looking to move to the suburbs being single and childless. Realtors use "walk score" all the time. Preparing for the future is an opportunity as in Marquette which is on Lake Superior. Due to its mining history, they had forgotten about the value of being on the water. The errand runners want free parking while the destination parkers don't mind paying for convenient parking.

Mr. Roseman advised that we are less focused on the commuter than what is best for Metuchen. The deck will facilitate development of downtown. Mr. Dyas commented that half of our commuter parking is non-resident. Mr. Massey commented that the deck could maximize developable space. Mr. Roseman noted the lack of sources other than development to provide tax revenue. The future may bring less dependence on the automobile and fewer cars per household. Mr. Brown noted that generally people will own less and rent what they need more frequently.

Attendee, Courtney McKnight asked, "Have you looked at congestion pricing?" Mr. Brown advised that he doesn't depend on any one technology due to rapid change. Multi-space has given way to corner kiosks. Pricing since Donald Shoup's book was published has become quite academic. But a small town can benefit from two tier pricing. The politics may be a problem but Mr. Brown recommends giving someone the authority to tinker with pricing. Elasticity of demand was described. Ventura, California went from free to \$3.00 hourly creating a lot of pushback. They did smart things with the money like creating a Wi-Fi system which helped the political issue.

Mr. Nelson Li asked if the use of bike racks might be a recommendation. Mr. Brown responded that limited real estate required non-vehicle solutions such as walking and biking. Mathematical models regarding the relationship between bike racks and the use of bicycles were questioned.

Mr. Roseman asked if the New Street lot would be an appropriate space for a bike rack. Haley's Pub was suggested as a rack location. Mr. Dyas recommended the Metuchen Master Plan to Mr.

Brown. Mr. Brown commented on the Haas' study. Forecasting future parking need was considered to be difficult at best. Mr. DeFoe asked what was needed by Mr. Brown. Identifying people to interview and times to observe was his response. Mr. Roseman noted that the authority was a few weeks away from completing documents regarding the lot and that once that was done we would address the transportation plan.

MINUTES:

The minutes of the February 19, 2013 meeting were moved by Mr. Dyas, seconded by Mr. Massey and approved unanimously.

BILLS:

Director, Crownover noted that the annual pension contribution was paid by TEPS and not by check. Mr. Dyas moved to pay the bill list and was seconded by Mr. Massey and approved unanimously. Mr. Crownover noted the use of a counter check to pay Mr. Otteau's bill.

CORRESPONDENCE:

The Borough healthcare resolution was discussed by Mr. Muldoon. Council expected the Authority to mirror this resolution. A lack of policy on the continuation of healthcare insurance for retirees prompted this resolution. Mr. Dyas questioned the wisdom of doing so. The policy reflects the state's handling of teachers. It provides continued coverage as a supplement to Medicare at age 65.

Marine Shale is a superfund site seeking \$13,000 for waste sent by Middlesex County that was collected at Pearl lot. Now Woodmont is demanding resolution of the issue.

A meeting with the American Legion, Woodmont and the Authority was scheduled for the following day. Mr. Dyas asked if a ground lease was planned for the Legion. Mr. Roseman indicated it was. Reversion to the Borough was desirable. No commercial use would be allowed. Mr. DeFoe noted that the MOU indicated that title, with restrictions, would be granted. Mr. Roseman noted a problem with the Legion's national organization. Mr. Dyas preferred that the council rather than the Legion determined what could be built there in the future. Mr. Roseman noted that 22 gas stations existed at one time in Metuchen.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Mr. Roseman noted the expense report appeared about right.

February Income: \$103,949.63; Year to date Income: \$202,644.07.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Mr. Crownover noted he had made progress on Pearl lighting. Mr. Roseman asked about the cemetery path lighting. Mr. Hughes of PSE&G will be followed up with.

OLD BUSINESS:

Resolution 2013-15, the 2012 audit resolution, was moved by Mr. Massey, seconded by Mr. Dyas and approved unanimously. The group affidavit was circulated for signatures. Mr. Defoe said that it was necessary to amend the 2012 budget in accordance with the audit showing revenue and expense in excess of budget.

NEW BUSINESS:

The annual wage review for Authority employees was considered. Mr. Crownover advised that the Authority had imposed 2 consecutive years of zero wage increases while the Borough had only one year. Mr. Dyas recommended a four percent increase noting the profit making nature of the Authority. Mr. DeFoe anticipated the difficulties of a future interim parking plan and its demand on employees. Mr. Dyas moved, seconded by Mr. Massey a four percent wage increase for all employees retroactive to January 1, 2013. This was approved unanimously.

Mr. Muldoon requested placing a clothing box to benefit Middlesex - Somerset Literacy Volunteers. Mr. Defoe noted the prior rejection of a similar request. Locating a box at South Main Street was moved by Mr. Dyas, seconded by Mr. Massey and approved unanimously. An insurance certificate will be provided regarding the box.

Mr. Dyas asked that the \$100,000 of street meter collection be deposited in Authority accounts rather than turned over directly to the Borough. Mr. DeFoe noted that the street meters are Borough property and therefore we simply provide a service to the Borough.

2013-16 authorizing Mr. Roseman to enter a contract with Nelson / Nygaard for a transportation plan was moved by Mr. Dyas, seconded by Mr. Massey and approved unanimously.

Mr. Massey suggested a 7:30 PM meeting start time. Notices of the new time will be published. Mr. Massey moved and Mr. Dyas seconded a motion to change the start time to 7:30 PM and was approved unanimously.

REPORT OF COUNCIL LIASION

ADJOURNMENT:

Adjournment was moved by Mr. Dyas, seconded by Mr. Massey and approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,