

BUSINESS DISTRICT & BEACH PARKING REVIEW
Ad-Hoc Committees
January 10, 2019
MINUTES

A joint meeting of the Business District Parking Review & Beach Parking Review Ad-Hoc Committees was held on **January 10, 2019 in Council Chamber in City Hall**, in accordance with proper notification, with the following members present: **Business District Parking Review Committee:** Chair Mayor Ted Becker, Matt DiSabatino, Darcia Ward, Nancy Stacey, Betsy Reamer and Jeff Ross. Councilperson Osler was not present. **Beach Parking Review Committee:** Chair Deputy Mayor Fred Beaufait, Councilperson Dennis Reardon, Linda Rathmanner, Pres Lee, and Don Wagner. Councilperson Rob Morgan was in the audience.

1. **Call to Order:** *Mayor Becker* called the meeting to order at **8:30 am**. This is a joint meeting of the Business District and Beach Parking Review Committees. Their work has been ongoing for several months and they have come together to consider actions that could be taken by both committees and how to move forward.
2. **Report from the Beach Parking Review Committee.**

Chair, Deputy Mayor Beaufait distributed and reviewed a brief summary of the Beach Parking Review Committee's actions and proposed recommendations, as follows:

- One of the first issues they addressed was the public getting on the dunes. They have recommended the installation of snow fences at the base of the dunes between Beach 2 and Roosevelt Inlet, where it is appropriate, to protect the dunes.
- There was discussion about the need for increased beach patrol, particularly from Beach 1 to Roosevelt Inlet and also along Bay Avenue, Cedar Street and the connecting streets. They have worked with the Chief of Police to increase police patrol starting with the 2019 summer season. They are hoping this will accomplish several things. They need to let people know that the city is 1) concerned about the public going onto the dunes and make the public aware that the city needs to protect the dunes; 2) vehicles need to be parked legally on the streets and 3) inappropriate behavior needs to be curtailed.
- In 1977 the city made an agreement with the state of Delaware that required no parking within 30 feet of the intersections on both sides of Cedar Street. The practice of parking too close to the intersections has created a visual hazard for vehicles coming off the side streets. They are recommending the city enforce this agreement.
- There was discussion about the need to delineate parking in several areas, including Roosevelt Inlet, in front of the Children's Beach House, in front of the Lewes Yacht Club and on the side of the Yacht Club along Maine Avenue.
- There was discussion about delineating parking. They are recommending the city have a survey done to define the right of ways on the connecting streets between Savannah Road and Roosevelt Inlet. This is the first step in determining where parking spaces can be located. There are several obstructions within the city's right of way in front of a number of houses that are limiting the spaces available for public parking. They need to determine a way to address these obstructions without causing hardships on the property owners.
- Also they discussed additional rest rooms along the beach. There are no public rest rooms between Roosevelt Inlet and Beach 1, which is part of the problem with people going on the dunes. At this point the city can't build a facility and additional port-a-pots are not necessarily appropriate. They are not making any recommendations regarding this issue.
- There was discussion about a jitney service for the beach and it was determined it would not solve the parking problem.

- They discussed increasing the amount of parking at Beach 1 & 2. There was opposition about cutting into the dunes to do this. Also, they were not sure the cost would justify the additional parking spaces. Beach 1 is already crowded and allowing for additional parking would only make it more crowded. They are not recommending any action.
- One of the biggest issues discussed was permit parking. Residents on the beach would love to have permit parking, but the committee did not feel it would be feasible at this time because, 1) it would eliminate access for beach visitors; 2) how would they manage it; and 3) how would it be enforced. They are not recommending a parking permit system at this time.
- They looked at moving all the mailboxes on the connector streets to one location on each street to help with freeing up the right of way for parking. The city will be contacting the post office to determine if this is feasible. If they agree, then the city will have to determine how to implement it.

It is important to say that while a number of people brought problems to the committee, the committee determined that public perception of the issues did not match the actual extent of the problems in terms of parking. He agreed there are problems, and most of the problems have to do with behavior rather than where to park. There are some problems with people parking in front of driveways or blocking mailboxes that need to be addressed. There are problems with residents parking on the street when they have a driveway. They heard that there is less of a parking issue on the canal-side of Cedar Street because beach visitors want to park on the bay-side which closer to the beach.

Chairperson Beaufait stated the first step is to have a survey completed to define the city's right of ways on the connector streets and then they will be able to determine what can and cannot be done.

3. Report from the Business District Parking Review Committee:

Chair Mayor Becker reported on the activities of the business district committee. They have discussed a variety of things, some of which overlap with the beach parking committee. There has been discussion about parking permits and as with the beach parking committee, it warrants more discussion before any action can be taken. He foresees the creation of a committee to look at the feasibility of a parking permit system. It is complicated and it would involve significant future expenditure to do it. He hopes that one of the outcomes is to continue moving forward with this issue.

- There was discussion about new *parking meters* which has been approved by city council. Single head meters will be installed in the business district and they will accept credit cards, Parkmobile, and cash. Stations meters will continue where they are currently located.
- They looked at the feasibility of a *parking garage*. The most feasible location is the M&T Bank parking lot on W. Third Street. At this point the bank is not considering selling their lot and there has been no movement on their position. If it became feasible to construct a parking garage, it would be very expensive, a multi-million-dollar project for the city, and would take time to make happen.
- They have looked at *combining the city's W. Third Street parking lot with the M&T lot*. There are multiple curb cuts which take up a lot of potential parking spaces. If they were able to reconfigure these two lots, they may be able to generate additional spaces. He feels they will need to address the downtown parking issues on an incremental basis as all the concerns cannot be fixed with one solution.
- One of their recommendations is to consider turning *W. Third Street into a one-way street in the opposite direction of Second Street and to create new angled parking spaces on one side*. The city engineer looked at the proposal and the only section that is wide enough to do this is the section between Savannah and Market Street. This would increase the number of parking spaces, predicated on the reduction of curb cuts at the city and M&T parking lots. The width of W. Third Street significantly decreases at St. Peter's Church down to Shipcarpenters Street and would not be feasible for angled parking.
- They reviewed the idea of *installing parking meters on Kings Highway*, between Savannah and the first residential property. This would generate approximately 10 additional parking spaces and increase the turn-over of parking for the downtown businesses. Currently this area is posted as 3-hour parking, but it has not

been enforced. This recommendation was brought to city council and was approved subject to further review. If meters are not installed in this area, they will need to look at increased enforcement of the time limit parking.

- The Schley Avenue parking lot was constructed several years ago with very limited use. They have looked at ways to encourage use of this lot. One of the suggestions was to start a *jitney service* from this lot to the downtown area. They are still looking into this possibility with many factors that need to be worked out. One of the objectives is to have downtown employees use this lot; therefore, it would require extended hours of operations. Further evaluation is needed.
- They identified the need for *additional signage* directing visitors to available parking beyond Second Street.

They continue to look at the feasibility of increasing parking along W. Third Street and the creation of a jitney service. The construction of a parking garage is not something on the table that the city can actively move forward with at this time. They will continue to evaluate the possibility in the future.

Mr. Shook, resident, stated he has a serious passion for Lewes and would hate to see Lewes' downtown go away. He has been looking at all the potential parking spaces in downtown for bicycles and scooters that are not being taken advantage of. A lot of people don't want a parking garage, but he feels they don't understand the need for it. There are a lot of people that come into Lewes to visit the restaurants and stores and there needs to be places to park. The current demographics of Lewes may be older people, but that will change and younger folks will come in. Without parking options, they will go somewhere else and downtown will die. They need to be proactive instead of reactive and they need to start on it now.

Mayor Becker stated there is a parking lot for bikes that is being used more and more and there needs to be additional signage to get people to use it. There has been some preliminary discussion about parking for scooters and the need to create parking spots for them. This would require some changes in the city code.

They continue to work with DelDOT's transit system. It comes downtown but they don't have a delineated spot on the outgoing route. DelDOT eliminated their route onto Second Street due to congestion. The Route 204 bus makes a regular trip from the transit area to the ferry and they are working to have this stop reinstated.

Mr. Leonardo, resident, questioned if they would extend the angled parking on Second Street all the way down to Shipcarpenters? It is the same width and would give additional parking. *Mayor Becker* stated that would require making the entire length of Second Street one-way but could be considered. *Mr. Beaufait* stated that would be an inconvenience to the residents in the two-way section of Second Street.

Jim Doyle, resident, 138 Kings Highway stated he feels dedicating parking along Kings Highway would be a big improvement, but he feels adding meters will only drive parking into the residential area. A lot of the people that park in this area are volunteers at the chamber or at the museum. He understands the need for more parking spaces for the downtown businesses, but the workers and volunteers are using those spots. The solution they are suggesting will leave the metered spots empty and move the workers and volunteers into the residential neighborhood. If it is a revenue issue, he would like to know how much those spaces would bring in.

Mayor Becker did not have that information. If council moves forward with this action, the meters would be in operation from May to October 9am-6pm.

Yolanda Leonardo, resident, corner of W. Third & Mulberry Street, stated concern about W. Third being one way all the way to Shipcarpenter Street. It would be an inconvenience to the people that live along W. Third, the same as it would be for the residents on Second Street.

Chip Davis, resident, E. Third Street, stated there had been a suggestion that scooters could park in the bicycle parking lot on Gills Neck Road. There are scooters parking in other bike parking areas around town and he requested signage posted to indicate bike parking only. He feels they need to look at all city properties that could be available for parking. They could expand the 1812 and Canalfont Park parking lot to include a second level. The beach area is a "wild west" for parking. It is difficult to determine where you can or cannot park. The bikes and scooters are coming, and they need to figure it out.

Darica Ward, Business District Park committee member, & resident, stated Lewes has a big parking inventory problem. She and Matt DiSabatino were asked to meet with the business owners as a part of their role on the committee to understand the impact of the lack of parking on their businesses. She discovered that the amount of foot traffic in Lewes is down and every business attribute it to parking. In her own business she hears that customers don't want to go downtown because there is no parking. A big part of their customer base is the residents but that is probably only 30%. They are relying on 70% of their customers coming in from out of town. They can't lose sight of the inventory problem. There have been multiple parking committees over time and the subject of a parking garage has been kicked down the road because it is hard and it costs money. She really hopes that will not be the case this time. They understand the cost of a parking garage. They have met with our legislators and have identified funding for a part of it which would off set the cost to the city. She is committed to finding a solution to the inventory problem because it will not go away.

Teresa Ford, business owner & resident, stated she feels there definitely is a parking problem. There has been discussion about the parking problems in Lewes for a very long time and they need to go in some direction that is pretty drastic and by the upcoming season. They need some kind of improvement and an idea how to proceed down the road. She has never parked at Schley Avenue and would not suggest to her employees to park there. It is too removed from the downtown area and not a pleasant idea. She questioned the lack of enforcement of the three-hour parking limitation. There is no signage and it is an immediate issue.

Mayor Becker agreed. *Ms. Townshend* stated the decorative sleeves where the signs were located have been removed. There are still some in place and the police are enforcing in those areas. Those signs will be replaced before May 1st.

Ms. Ford questioned if they have addressed the Mason's parking lot. If they guaranteed the bank and the Masons parking spaces, they should be a part of the discussion. *Mayor Becker* stated in the past they have been approached and it was a definite no, but they could be approached again.

Lisa Berlin, business owners, questioned if M&T Bank is willing to open up their parking lot to the public now? That could be this summer. *Mayor Becker* stated it is an ongoing discussion with them.

Mayor Becker stated that fixing this problem will have to be incremental. Creating angled parking on W. Third Street and enlarging the parking lots are pieces of the solution. Improving signage to guide people to where parking is available doesn't add to the inventory but could help people feel less frustrated. Lewes has become a multi-modal center due to a network of trails, which is wonderful but adds to the problem.

Linda Rathmanner, Beach Parking Committee member & resident, stated it appears that a lot of Lewes' problem is due to all development. She questioned if there is any way for the developers to be a part of the solution, possibility through an impact fee. They should be a part of the solution and not just the problem.

Mayor Becker stated it would have to be a voluntary commitment on the part of the developments outside of the city limits. It is an interesting idea and could be considered for developments inside the city.

Matt DiSabatino, Business District Parking Committee member & restaurant owner, stated they know that the employees, tourist and locals tend to park in the free residential areas, and they know it is a big problem. It is important to gather more information from the residential community on how they can solve that issue. He doesn't see a good solution without an increase in the parking inventory. All the solutions discussed are good, but they just relocate the problem somewhere else. In his opinion, the only solution to the problem is to increase the parking inventory. The other thing is vibrancy and preservation. In order to preserve Lewes, sometimes it requires difficult and bold decisions to move forward. He hopes they will be able to make the bold decisions to keep Lewes the wonderful place it is.

Councilperson Morgan questioned if by saying increased parking inventory, does that mean a parking garage? Mr. DiSabatino agreed that is what it means. A parking garage would be an A+ solution and even beyond that they would need to address the problem with other ideas.

Ms. Ward stated a Future Scan study was done regarding the macro issues affecting Lewes, what are the trends, and how to plan for the future. A section of that study had to do with parking. In 2012, it reported there was a 19% shortage of parking spaces. With what has happened since 2012, a huge amount of growth has occurred in the Lewes area. We need to be thinking what it will be like in 5 or 10 years from now. She

agreed there is a major inventory problem and it will continue because of growth. She chose to live in Lewes because of the small-town atmosphere and that is what's at risk.

Nancy Stacey, Business District Parking Committee member & resident, stated they all know there is an inventory problem, but they also see parking spaces that are not being utilized such as at the Schley Avenue parking lot and the baseball complex. We all know a parking garage will not happen by this summer. They need to look at this issue in an integrated way because any small change made, may just be pushing the parking into onto a different residential street. They need to be bold, but they also need to be creative and look at it in an integrated way.

Betsy Reamer, Business District Parking Committee member & Lewes Chamber of Commerce, stated she was a part of the focus group formed when they were exploring the development of the Canalfront Park. It was the overwhelming consensus that there be parking for people that have mobility issues. The other consideration was the view corridor and that is the reason why there isn't a second level on either of those parking lots. People want to see the canal and a second layer would disturb that.

Mr. Davis stated it would be a difficult decision but there is a big problem. It is city owned property and it could be designed to not block the view.

4. Recommendations for action to be implemented for the 2019 summer season

Mayor Becker stated there is an item on city council's agenda for recommendation from the parking committees. They will provide an interim report on the discussion from today's meeting. The Beach Parking Committee is interested in a survey to determine the city's right of way. There is a common thread of exploring the feasibility of a parking permit system.

Ms. Stacey stated there are such diverse views on a permit system she thinks it is important to have a public forum for discussion and comment. Mayor Becker agreed.

Jeff Ross, Business District Parking committee member & rector of St Peter's Church, stated he would be very concerned about the impact of a permit system on the viability of the church's ability to stay in downtown Lewes. At St. Peter's there are more AA groups than any other location in Lewes. They have a lot of people that come in for recovery. They also have volunteer groups that use their spaces on a regular basis, and 20% of the halls use is by outside organizations. It is already very difficult for people to get to St. Peter's and if there is an additional barrier it will be impossible.

Mayor Becker stated another common thread is exploring a jitney system. *Mr. Beaufait* stated this is not a recommendation of the Beach Parking Committee but could be explored for the future. He hopes to have a report ready for the council meeting.

5. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at **9:45 am**.

Minutes submitted by

Alice Erickson
Recording Secretary