

Business District Parking Review Ad-Hoc Committee
January 28, 2018
MINUTES

A meeting of the Business District Parking Review Ad-Hoc Committee was held on **January 28, 2018 in Council Chamber in City Hall**, in accordance with proper notification, with the following members present: Co-Chairs Mayor Ted Becker and Councilperson Bonnie Osler, Matt DiSabatino, Betsy Reamer, Nancy Staisey, and Jeff Ross. Ex-officio members present were: City Planner Tom West, Chief of Police Tom Spell and Code Enforcement Officer Steve Barrow. Member(s) not present: Darcia Ward

1. **Call to Order:** Mayor Becker called the meeting to order at **8:30am**.
2. **Approval of the minutes:** *Ms. Osler made a motion to approve the December 4, 2018 meeting minutes as written, seconded by Ms. Stacey, all voting in favor, motion carried.*
3. **Update on recommendations**

Creation of a jitney service between Schley Avenue parking lot and Second Street. *Mayor Becker* reported this is still ongoing. There has been some discussion with DelDOT about re-establishing a bus to come down Second Street. There is not a defined location for the bus to stop on Savannah Road near Second Street at this time. The jitney is still a viable option, but more research is needed. There is still the question about what population the jitney would serve. Once that is determined, they will be able to figure out the services that would be provided. They are looking at two parking lots to service a jitney: Schley Avenue and Beebe's lot at the end of Market Street.

Mr. DiSabatino stated his employees would use it during the day but later in the evening it could be a problem. It will depend on the hours of the jitney. The last of his employees don't leave until 10 or 11pm. For his three restaurants, there are approximately 30 employees. He doesn't know the transportation needs of these employees though. *Ms. Stacey* stated unless there is an incentive for employees to park in these lots, they won't. If they are able to park one block away, that's what they will do. Would the employers along Second Street be open to making it a requirement for their employees to use these lots? *Mr. DiSabatino* stated he feels they would consider it, but the challenge is how to make that happen?

Mr. Becker questioned the Chamber about including a parking map in their brochure. *Ms. Reamer* explained it is on the Historic Lewes map, but the brochures are usually picked up by visitors after they have driven around looking for a parking place. It is also on their website but not everyone goes to their website before visiting. She has added verbiage about Lewes being a walking town to encourage people to walk. She could see there being a separate piece with a map showing all the remote parking lots are and information about a jitney.

Chip Aperson, Director of Operations, Historical Society, stated they would be very interested in a jitney service to get their customers to their various buildings throughout Lewes. They are undertaking the development of a phone app that would highlight key locations throughout the town and a jitney service would be a key factor in this endeavor.

Mayor Becker clarified that what has been discussed so far does not involve a circulator service of a jitney. They are primarily looking to move people from the Schley Avenue lot to downtown. That could be a future expansion of the service but is not being considered at this time.

Metering on Kings Highway. A recommendation was made to city council, which was tentatively approved for the metering of spaces along Kings Highway, between Savannah Road and the beginning of the residential area on the Zwaanendael Museum side. The city engineer, Charlie O'Donnell provided information that indicated there would be approximately 14 spaces created. Two spaces would need to be reserved for the Chamber of Commerce and the Museum, so the yield would be 10 metered spaces. Although it is currently 2 hours parking, it has not been actively enforced for some time and has become a location for all day parking. The meters would be active 9 hours per day, at \$1 per hour for 168 days per year. The yield would be approximately \$15,000 based on 100% usage. A factor of 50% usage would result in \$7,500 in the first year and the cost of the meters is approximately \$7,500 also, therefore the meters would pay for themselves in the first year. This is not so much about creating revenue but creating turnover for the downtown businesses. There was concern voiced by three residents that live along this area of Kings Highway that it would push parking into the residential area. The benefit of creating turnover is worth moving forward with it.

Anne Hanzel, 310 W. Third Street questioned what provisions will be made for those doing park maintenance in the park during the summer. *Mayor Becker* stated Lewes in Bloom is usually given a parking permit that waives the parking fee.

Councilperson Osler pointed out that if they try it and it proves to be a problem to the residents in the area, the meters could be removed.

Mayor Becker stated delineating spaces and installing meters will probably result in more parking spaces available.

M&T Bank & City lot Redesign. *Mayor Becker* reported they continue to look at this idea. There were very preliminary drawings done and it would result in some additional parking if the lots are either reconfigured or combined. M&T has shown no interest in the sale of their lot at this time, but they have indicated interest in the possibility of the lot being reconfigured.

The city's W. Third Street parking lot has 19 parking spaces. The M&T lot has several factors that are taking away possible spaces. There would be the potential for approximately 40 spaces in the M&T lot. There are currently 6 parking spaces reserved for the Rodney Hotel and the bank would require 12 spaces. If a license agreement can be worked out with M&T Bank, the city would be able to meter the balance of the spaces. The bank's drive through is critical to them. When they looked at combining the lots, the yield was not significant enough to go through the expense of regrading. This would all be subject to a license agreement with the bank.

Matt Carter stated there is a pretty severe parking problem in the residential and business areas. A lot of them feel the best way to solve the problem is to increase the amount of parking available. He agrees this is a relationship building opportunity and it is good they are moving forward in developing it. But at the end of the day, they all want to start having some action. He doesn't think they should table the idea of increasing the parking inventory; there needs to be plan B. They need to be open to locations where the parking inventory could be increased. Adding spaces is the solution.

Mayor Becker stated the Schley Avenue parking lot is under used and if they can increase usage, meter spaces along Kings Highway and possibly create additional parking on the M&T lot, they will have added significantly to the parking inventory.

Sumner Crosby, Missouri Avenue, stated they are focusing on a space here and a space there when there might be a much bigger problem. He doesn't believe the congestion on Second Street is going to be solved with a couple spaces here and a couple spaces there. Beebe Hospital has a parking issue as well. Is there any way to work with Beebe to get a parking garage out on Market Street? Has a study been done to evaluate how many more people they want walking Second Street? How many more people do we need to accommodate? What is the difference between the supply and demand?

Mayor Becker stated they have heard there is a lot more demand than there is supply, particularly from the retail component during the day and the restaurants day and evening. There have been multiple parking studies done through the years and none have come up with a definitive answer. Yes, they are picking up spaces here and there, they are recognizing there isn't a piece of land where they could put a parking garage, nor do they have the support of the community to find the resources to build such a structure. In the past it has been determined that Beebe Hospital would be too far a walk from downtown for many people.

Sumner Crosby suggested looking into a bicycle system that people could use to get back and forth from parking lots that are further away from downtown than is practical to walk. *Mayor Becker* stated this type of system would probably not be practical in Lewes. *Matt Carter* stated there are plenty of people in Lewes that live that type of life and it could work. The problem is those people have to park somewhere to be able to use this kind of system. *Mayor Becker* stated as the Lewes Transit Facility becomes more active, hopefully more people will opt to park out there and take the DART bus into town. That could be another alternative.

4. Consideration & recommendation to change traffic flow on W. Third Street between Market Street and Savannah Road

Mayor Becker stated the M&T lot redesign would play into the consideration of changing the traffic flow on W. Third Street between Market and Savannah.

Mr. O'Donnell explained at the last meeting it was discussed to come down Second Street and loop around Shipcarpenter Street and then one way down W. Third Street, trying to accommodate some angled parking between Savannah and Market Streets. Now the loop would come down Second Street to Market Street and W. Third Street would remain two way between Market and Shipcarpenter with one-way traffic from Savannah to Market Street going in the opposite direction as Second Street. Shipcarpenter would remain one way. There could be angled parking between Market Street and Savannah Road. The parallel parking spaces would be moved to the Second Street side of W Third Street. They could add up to 13 spaces by making these changes.

Ms. Staisey stated there are several driveways along W. Third Street going into commercial buildings that are very narrow and require backing out. She is concerned about the angled parking spaces and not having enough room to make the turn. *Mr. O'Donnell* stated he would have to look at that.

Ms. Staisey questioned if a study has been done on how the proposed change in the traffic direction would affect the overall traffic pattern in the downtown area. She explained the change with a right turn only at the end of W. Third onto Savannah will cause a problem with people new to town looking for a parking space. Vehicles usually turn left on Second Street and then loop onto W. Third Street, turn left onto Savannah Street and return to Second Street. The right turn only could create confusion about how to get back to Second Street. She is concerned they would determine the easiest thing to do would be to leave Lewes.

Ms. Osler agreed, she is concerned more vehicles will use Front Street, which is very narrow and would cause additional congestion problems. It is very important to fully understand what the consequences will be before the implementation of a change in traffic flow.

Mayor Becker agreed, the intersection of W Third and Savannah Street may need to retain both left and right turn options.

Mr. Ross stated there are a lot of delivery trucks that park on W. Third Street where the new parking spaces would be located. The other choke hold is at W. Third Street between Market and Mulberry Streets. A lot of vehicles drive this section as if it is one way, especially big trucks. Sometimes it is very difficult to get around that corner because people are taking up both lanes. It seems that it will be a significant challenge to implement this change.

Ms. Staisey stated the delivery trucks that park on W. Third Street would have to come down Second Street to get to Third Street or turn onto W. Fourth Street and come through the residential neighborhoods on narrow roads.

Ms. Reamer stated the Cape May Lewes Ferry and the Lewes Chamber of Commerce have written to DeIDOT to request the bus stop on Market Street be reinstated. If they agree to it, the buses would then come down Second Street again.

Mayor Becker stated this is a preliminary consideration and nothing has been decided at this time.

Tom Demedio, Savannah Road questioned if there has been an effort to approach M&T Bank to purchase the property for a parking garage? A parking garage would change the public's perception about coming to Lewes and being able to find a parking space. It goes beyond the impact of a couple months during the summer. They need to go to M&T with a legitimate offer that would be a positive way to inform the public that the city is working on the problem. It may take a while, but they are working on it. The perception would be that the city is trying to find a solution.

Mayor Becker stated there has not been a fiscal approach to discussion with M&T Bank. It has been a significant accomplishment to get them to discuss the proposed changes. They will continue to pursue the idea with them.

Ms. O/ser explained M&T Bank has told them the lot is not for sale. That doesn't mean they will stop asking, but this is the bank's position. There is some question if a parking garage would be feasible in that location, including the city lot. That would be an engineering challenge. At the end of the day, the residents of Lewes would all need to vote on it. They have been trying to come up with the best options to address the issue in the short term while they continue to work on longer term solutions. If there was a place to put a parking garage, it would have been addressed by the many parking committees that have been formed over the years. There has been discussion about how to get people to use the satellite parking lots. One of the issues is people don't want to walk 2/10th of a mile but if there was a jitney to transport them, would they use it. The city needs to figure that out before looking at a structure. They are working on it and trying to find more parking wherever they can. The big solutions come with big problems and big price tags.

Mayor Becker agreed M&T is not interested in selling their lot. Would they be interested in a partnership could make a difference. The fact that they are interested in doing something at grade level opens a door to continue the dialogue.

Mr. DiSabatino stated public perception is key to the parking issue. If there is a designated area or facility it could change perception. He is concerned that adding parking spaces a few at a time will not achieve a change. They are working on a solution but moving forward they have to change public perception that there is a parking problem in Lewes.

5. Directional signage to identify location of public parking

Nancy Staisey distributed and reviewed information. They have discussed increasing the number of parking spaces but there is also a problem with the current inventory not being used.

Ms. Staisey reviewed four issues:

- 1) recognition of a parking lot and that parking is allowed,
- 2) having directional signage to the available parking lots,
- 3) signage for visitors that might be circling looking for parking,
- 4) signs themselves.

Ms. Staisey reviewed the parking lots currently in Lewes in relationship to these four issues: W. Third Street, 1812 Parking Lot, Canalfront Park, Schley Avenue, the tennis courts and Lewes Little League Field. All have issues with being recognized as a parking lot and the lack of signage.

Ms. O/ser stated that while there may not be a lot of directional parking signs, there are a lot of signs that could make it even more confusing. Another problem is that what parking signs there are, are not uniform and therefore, not easily recognized.

There was discussion about adopting the DelDOT universal sign for parking.

Mr. DiSabatino stated that during the summer, with the exception of the Schley Avenue lot, these parking lots are all full, even with bad signage. There is a need for more parking spaces.

6. Discussion regarding possible creation of permit parking system

Mayor Becker stated even though there has been some discussion, there is still a lot of research needed and he doesn't see this moving forward this summer. They need to hear more from the residents and determine where the boundaries would be.

Ms. Reamer stated it is not just an employee parking problem. It is an issue with visitors and residents also. She doesn't feel they have enough information to present recommendations at this time. She wants to have more public input on the subject.

Mayor Becker agreed the city will need to hold public workshops on the issue once the boundaries are determined.

Ms. Osler stated if there is a permit system that is only available to residents on particular streets, the rest of the city's residents would be excluded. Parking issues are not just in the downtown area or on the beaches. It is a shared problem.

Ms. Staisey stated the problem along Second Street is going to move further and further into the residential areas. She agreed there needs to be a workshop on this issue. She is getting a lot of questions from residents.

Mr. DiSabatino stated the city needs to reconsider the issue of a valet service in downtown. This was presented to council several years ago and it wasn't approved. He feels it could work in Lewes but the big challenge is to identify a pick up and drop off location and the Schley Avenue could be used for this purpose. This could increase the parking inventory and help to change public perception. He would like to invite them to a meeting.

Mayor Becker agreed it would be worth investigating.

7. **Discussion & approval of report to Mayor & City Council of committee's recommendation.** Tabled to a future meeting.
8. **Schedule next meeting:** The next meeting was scheduled on *February 15th at 8:30am.*
9. **Adjourn:** There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at **10:20am.**

Minutes submitted by,

Alice Erickson
Recording Secretary