

City of Westfield, Massachusetts

OFF-STREET PARKING

Elli Myer, Chair
Joseph Golio
John Regan
Bridget Matthews-Kane,
Council Liaison

CITY HALL
59 COURT STREET
WESTFIELD, MA 01085
413-572-6202 x2

RECEIVED

AUG 28 2023

WESTFIELD CITY CLERK

OFF-STREET PARKING COMMISSION

Wednesday, February 15, 2023

Municipal Building

59 Court Street, Westfield, MA

Room 315 6:00 PM

MINUTES

Chairperson Elli Meyer called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM. Chairperson Myer and Commissioner Golio were present. Also, in attendance were Community Development Director, Peter Miller and City Counselor, Bridget Matthews-Kane.

The next Off-Street Parking Commission meeting was confirmed for Wednesday, March 15, 2023.

A motion was made by Chairperson Meyer, seconded and unanimously VOTED to approve the minutes for June 21, 2022, as presented.

Counselor Matthews-Kane presented the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program, MVP Grant study from the Town of Shrewsbury regarding the regulatory update for sustainable parking requirement. She read the study from the Town of Shrewsbury into the record.

- **Zoning Bylaw Parking Requirement Update:** The Town of Shrewsbury will pursue an innovative regulatory update of the parking requirements in the streets. The project will consist of an extensive review of the existing parking bylaw. Research in the innovative parking regulations that have been successful in other communities' recommendations for new parking requirements to reduce and replace parking spaces in commercial and residential development with green infrastructure as well as incentives for owners to redesign existing parking lots.

- The Town of Shrewsbury hired a consultant and received \$90,000 for the Shrewsbury Zoning Bylaw.

Peter Miller stated the following:

- Urban heat zones are a major issue with the primary contributor being, surface parking and excess of service parking.
- On the political side of the world, it will be interesting on implementation. He expressed that the study would be helpful.

Counselor Matthews-Kane asked Peter Miller if the Elm Plaza Project will use up a lot of parking spaces. Peter Miller stated that it would not. He added the Plaza will lose some parking space but it will consist of more green space. Chairperson Myer, stated that the Elm Plaza will be more organized because a lot of people are parking in the wrong areas.

Peter Miller stated that MVP program is worth pursuing. He also stated that he will put it on the next agenda for the Board to consider and to authorize the submission of the application. Counselor Matthews-Kane asked if the Off-Street Parking Commission can have something in writing on their thoughts about the study and/or send a representative before the City Council to talk more about the MVP grant.

REGULAR BUSINESS

Update from Community Development Director Peter Miller regarding the following:

- a. Elm Street/Gravel lot Plan

Peter Miller presented the Downtown Plaza Project, Elm Street Parking and Public Urban Space, before the commission.

- The Plaza would not be a dedicated permanent parkland.
- The bid for the Plaza Project was advertised on February 15, 2023 and the responses are due by March 2, 2023.
- Have a bidder who is able to do the entirety of the Plaza Project.
- Base bid will consist of primary portion of the Plaza Project.
- The alternate Bid, if enough money, would be the front portion, which is to make the Elm Street frontage look better and as requested by WRA as well.
- The final Bid would be the back section of the Plaza Project.
- Would like to push to get the whole Plaza Project done.
- The Plaza Project mostly consists of tree planters and green areas.

Chairperson Myer asked if the Plaza Project will be paved and asked if there would be huge amount of sewer water.

Peter Miller stated that the Plaza Project will be paved and that there is a drainage plan part of the Plaza Project. The drainage plan consists of five structures that would be collecting the surface storm water. The goal of the Plaza Project is to increase green space to an extent and a place where the public would gather and to attract people downtown.

Chairperson Myer voiced her concern about what the City would do to discourage the homeless and the nip problem in the downtown. She voiced her concern about spending all this effort just for the Plaza to be hidden.

Peter Miller assured her that the Elm Plaza will be a visible area. The Elm Plaza will require additional maintenance to be there and will become the focus area for the Department of Public Works. He stated that he is currently working on a maintenance plan with the Department of Public Works for all of it this summer.

The maintenance plan will consist majority of the City lots, as well as portions of Elm Street and will assist Department of Public Works with the bike trail.

Chairperson Myer voiced her concern about the Thomas lot being full of trash, ash trays, nips and being very un-kept. She later asked if the Plaza Project would include a bathroom.

Peter Miller agreed that with the maintenance plan, it is set to make the parking lots more attractive and hopes that he will get reasonable responses with the bidding on the Plaza Project. He stated that adding a bathroom building to the Plaza Project would be too expensive.

Both Chairperson Myer and Peter Miller agreed that they will use City trashcans as events require.

Peter Miller stated the following:

- The challenge will be getting through the summer.
- The Plaza Project is set to be between May through July period. The timing lines up with the university not being around. There will be less demand during that time when the construction is set to happen.
- The Elm Street lot will be completely offline during this time for the public.
- Major concern would be Maple Leaf Pub and other local businesses in the Park Square area.

Chairperson Myer asked if the Tech Center would run into issues as well and the Director stated that Tech Center is currently using the Franklin Street lot. He expressed that this Plaza Project will be a bit more difficult regarding parking but he is confident that they will figure out how to get through this.

b. Staffing Update

Peter Miller introduced Valentina Rafalskiy, the new scribe for the Off-Street Parking Commission. Valentina works in the City Clerk's office. Her primary duties are relative to the Licensing Department, Liquor Licensing and Auto Dealer Licensing, etc. Her only duty for the Off-Street Parking is coming to the meetings to take notes.

Kerri Francis is still doing bills, issuing parking permits and processing parking tickets.

- c. Lot Fall Maintenance Update & Planning for Summer 2023 Maintenance
- The City has spent roughly \$14,000 - \$15,000 last fall between October and November timeframe on the cleanup for Reeder and Franklin Street lots.
 - Plumley Landscaping was contracted for the project and they did an amazing job on cleaning out the areas and the ground is already prepped for spring.
 - No overgrowth at this point.
 - Plumley Landscaping cut back a bunch of trees allowing more space on the Reeder lot.
 - Summer 2023, possibly use Plumley Landscaping again, as a vendor, not only for cleanup but for landscaping purposes as well.
 - Currently working on prices and the funds will be used from the Revolving Funds.
 - Grounds will be re-mulched if the City has a service on board, or rocks if no service is available.
 - The Sheriff's Department cleared out several Parking lots for free of charge.
 - Find a day to dedicate for lot clean up and mulching. In the past mulch was donated to the City. Possibly Earth Day.
 - Works with several interested groups to participate with clean up. Created an Off-Street Parking Commissioner application for the third Commissioner needed for the commission.

Counselor Matthews-Kane suggested to offer the High School National Honor Society students the volunteer hours of cleaning up the lots. Peter Miller agreed and stated he would reach out to the High School Principal and see if they can get the students incorporated for the volunteer hours.

d. FY24 Budget

Peter Miller stated the following:

- Investigating the possibility of creating a Parking Benefit District in downtown Westfield where certain revenues generated from parking can be earmarked to make improvements in the downtown area, both inside parking lots and along streetscapes in designated area.
- Parking Benefit District is a specific classification that would allow the City to use the money that is collected from parking permits and parking fines to improve and maintain the districts not just the lots.
- Revolving Fund are spending money to maintain the lots and the lots only.
- Parking Benefit District would allow to collect the parking tickets and parking permit funds together to be used for funds for downtown maintenance, sidewalks, flower programs, etc.
- Bring it up to the Mayor for him to present before the City Council to forfeit the revenues from the parking tickets from the general funds and dedicate them to the Parking Benefit District.

- Currently the Off-Street Parking only gets the revenue from the parking permits not the parking tickets.
 - Parking tickets bring in revenue of \$25,000 and parking permits bring around \$22,000.
 - Handicap fines are a separate account. It was used for an accessible playground at Cross Street Playground, crosswalks, and anything that is accessibility related.
 - Administer permitting program for downtown Off-Street parking lots.
 - Oversee enforcement operation and appeals of parking tickets.
 - Identify best strategy to maintain parking lots and the streetscapes associated with them in downtown.
 - Evaluate findings of environmental assessments at 47 School Street and consider additional grant applications to comply with DEP requirements for clean-up.
 - Request a raise for the Parking Enforcement Officer just to maintain with minimum wage.
 - Purchase Service Budget is level funded. Will be moving the trash removal over to the revolving account.
 - Making payments for electric vehicles charging stations in School Street lot, two in the Gravel lot and one to two in the depot square lot.
 - The City has a new parking ticketing vendor who deducts an amount from each ticket.
 - Parking sticker revenue is down about 10%. We have collected approximately \$17,000 year to date through the sticker program.
 - There is \$55,000 balance in the Off-Street Maintenance Revolving account that is used for Verizon Wireless, uniforms, etc.
1. Consideration of renewal of license agreement allowing Vlad's Fired Pizza Truck to locate in the Elm/Gravel lot

Peter Miller stated the following:

- Move Vlad's Fired Pizza Truck from Elm Street/Gravel lot to Meadow Street lot until the construction is complete in the Elm Street/Gravel lot area.
 - Vlad's Fired Pizza currently pays \$25 per month for the permit.
 - Reconstruct monthly payments instead of per occurrence.
2. Discussion relative to recruiting other food trucks to Elm/Gravel lot

Peter Miller stated the following:

- Created a permitting checklist/flyer to attract other food trucks for the Plaza especially once its completed
 - Potentially have three food trucks along the sidewalk in the new Plaza.
 - Currently there are six to eight food trucks that are operating in town.
 - Come up with a payment plan for new and/or existing Food Trucks.
3. Discussion relative to Electronic Communication & Municipal Online Safety Training

Peter Miller stated the following:

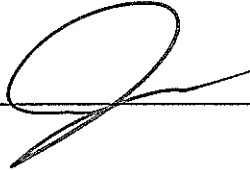
- Complete Cyber Security Training
4. Discussion relative to Off-Street Parking Commission and potential Ordinance Amendment
- Peter Miller stated that he is currently still working on the potential ordinance language to improve what it is that we have to do.
 - Chairperson Myer added other cities have an active downtowns that always are doing things to attract people.

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. Approval of monthly bills.
 - a. A motion was made by Chairperson Myer, and unanimously VOTED to approve the monthly regular and revolving bills as submitted.

With no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Golio to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Elli Myer, Chair



6/21/23
Date Approved