

SHARON CITY COUNCIL

Purpose: Public Hearing
Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2019
Time: 6:00 P.M.
Location: Sharon Municipal Building Council Chambers

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

TIME: 6:02 P.M.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Council:

President Connelly
 Mr. James
 Mrs. Saylor

Mr. Lucas
 Mrs. Bundrant

Robert Fiscus, City Manager
 Attorney Madden, City Solicitor
 Daphne Parrish, City Clerk

News Media: The Herald

Department Heads:

Edward Stabile, Chief of Police
 Jason Tomko, Finance Director
 Melissa Phillips, Director of Community Development
 David Tomko, Director of Code Enforcement and Public Works

- I.) **LEGAL NOTICE:** *The City of Sharon will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday March 6, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, Sharon Municipal Building, 155 West Connelly Blvd. Sharon, PA, to discuss issues related to parking – enforcement, metering, and solutions.*
- II.) The purpose of the hearing is to discuss parking issues – enforcement, metering, and solutions.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Fiscus thanked the merchants for the impressive attendance. He reviewed recent steps taken by the City to resolve parking issues, including removal of inconsistent signage and placing signs reflecting the Ordinances (3-Hour Parking and No Overnight Parking). He stated the survey results make the issue more complex. The survey was set up to target the location of specific issues. Mr. Fiscus reviewed the results and noted no specific trend emerges from the results. He suggested parking limitations during business hours, and tailoring parking to meet the needs of the specific businesses. He also suggested the City consider using a consultant, which is a costly solution, to make recommendations regarding parking, meters, kiosks, etc. The goal is not creating revenue for the City but making parking available for businesses.

Mrs. Bundrant stated she has received many complaints and we need to get a consensus of what the solution needs to be. She commented the County employs a person to monitor their parking.

Mr. Lucas stated there is a definite problem and people who work downtown are parking on the streets rather than the parking garage. He said no matter what solution is found, enforcement will be an issue.

Mr. James agreed that there is a problem and cited that owners are parking on the street all day long and don't seem to care. He stated he would be in favor of hiring a consultant.

Mr. Connelly opened the meeting to citizens.

Daniel Smith, 42 East State Street, thanked Council for looking into this problem. He admitted he parks on the street in front of his business due to a physical impairment that prevents him from walking distances. He stated when Primary Health Network parking was available it was used by customers. Mr. Lucas suggested he request an exemption from Primary Health Network to park in the lot due to his physical issues and stated that Council may be able to be a bridge to make this happen. Mr. Smith suggested a need for signage directing vehicles to the parking garage, as there are people who do not realize the garage exists. Mr. Fiscus stated the top two floors are available for public parking.

A representative from Telestar, 170 West State Street, stated his company has had parking issues. They employ approximately 80 employees and typically need parking for 30-40 vehicles. The police have been to the building with parking complaints. He stated management strictly enforces the 3-hour parking limit amongst employees. He feels their business is being targeted and harassed and he would be in favor of meters if that brings fairness to the situation. The Church has been helpful in allowing parking in their lot. Mr. Lucas suggested they request parking spaces from the owners of the old Sacred Heart Church (lot is located behind Career Link). Mrs. Saylor also suggested requesting spots at the City Centre.

Geno Rossi, 709 Crowder Avenue, asked about the city lots and if the Primary Health garage has been assessed. Mr. Fiscus stated the first and second floors of the garage are utilized but the third and fourth floors are relatively unused. Mr. Rossi stated there is no reason to approach private entities for parking solutions when the garage floors are available. He feels the issue is not with the Telestar call center, but rather the call center located in the former Reyers Outlet building. Mr. Rossi also researched on revenues generated by parking kiosks and it showed that it can take 5 years before kiosks are paid for and begin generating revenues. Mr. Fiscus added that the rates charged will determine how long before income is realized.

Carla Infante, 142 East State Street, stated that the average age of her customers is 68 years old and many cannot walk long distances. She holds 3-hour classes and if her customers received tickets for parking longer, her business will suffer. She stated that parking on the street is a problem for employees and the tenants in the apartment building are parking everywhere. Her classes are held on Saturday mornings and Thursday evenings, so parking has been adequate.

Laura Ackley, 384 East State Street, read from various letters from merchants unable to attend:

- Marsha Moyer, Tickled, 110 East State Street. Ms. Moyer's letter stated paid parking would feel unwelcoming and wondered how the City can afford it. She suggested all employees be assigned parking lots and requested more handicapped spots.
- Shawn Starkey, West State Street. Mr. Starkey's letter stated that meters will deter traffic downtown and will instead send customers to malls where parking is free.
- Rosie Wasser, 114 East State Street. Ms. Wasser wrote that she is opposed to parking meters and there would be plenty of parking if employees did not occupy the spots. She outlined the reasons metered parking would have a negative impact on her beauty salon.
- Karen Winner stated metering would be a big mistake and be unwelcoming.
- Mark Jubelirer suggested an Ordinance that would fine businesses or employees. He stated that meters would be uninviting and then there is the issue of resources to enforce.
- Gary Rose stated the entire issue comes down to enforcement. He cited employees as the problem.

Ms. Ackley stated that Michael Lisac has gone out of his way to provide parking for his tenants in his buildings and leased space for the tenants at 69 East State Street. He has made repairs at the Library parking lot at his own expense. She stated that according to research by Destination Downtown,

1-2-hour parking is the worst solution. She offered to share some of resources and concluded that she is not in favor of meters.

Mrs. Bundrant noted the majority are against meters. She continued it seems that employees are the problem and aside from assigning spots, she is unsure what else can be done.

Mr. Fiscus stated there is going to be significant enforcement of the 3-Hour Ordinance and signage, and details of enforcement are being worked out. While 3-hour limits are great, they become easy to abuse.

John Bianco, Corinthian, 47 Vine Avenue, asked if the 3-hour limit is within a 24-hour period. Mr. Fiscus stated this is not specific. Mr. Bianco suggested addition of signs "Until 5:00 PM" because the problem is Monday-Friday 9-5. The issue on Vine Avenue has occurred since Primary Health Network came in and the parking for the apartment complex across the street was forced over to Pitt Street. Mr. Bianco stated he tries saving spots to accommodate the needs of event guests and the 3-Hour parking limit has helped. Mr. Bianco concluded that he is not opposed to kiosk parking and normally parking is not an issue after 5:00 PM.

Mr. Smith agreed that after hours there is not an issue and offered to help fund raise if another parking garage were built.

Christina Ewing, 106 East State Street, stated she does not agree with parking meters. She feels meters would punish customers by forcing them to pay for parking while violating-employees will park for free. She commented that in November during open enrollment for healthcare, parking was unavailable everywhere.

Sherris Moreira, Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce, 41 Chestnut Street, spoke regarding the parking lot behind the Chamber, where everyone parks. She stated that people are concerned about parking meters and any deterrent would be a bad thing. She stated that Sharon is not at a point to be able to sustain putting in meters and we need to have conversations with businesses that have numerous employees and request they park in the designated lots.

Laura Ackley noted to Council that Gilbert's Insurance leases a lot from the Lube for employee parking. She also stated several years ago signs were placed to direct to all day parking.

Jen Krezeczowski stated in a downtown environment, there is always going to be some walking. She does not believe Sharon is ready for meters but needs to get funding for enforcement. Until there is enforcement, nothing will change. Mr. Fiscus assured her that there will be enforcement. She stated employers need to be responsible for providing parking. She said a map is being created that will illustrate where to park.

Jim Landino stated there is no incentive for development when there are no places to park. He also stated that people will need to walk some.

Mrs. Bundrant made a comparison of walking downtown to the distance walking from Walmart to your vehicle in the lot. She cited the need for enforcement and assigning spots.

Mr. Connelly stated that while this is a huge problem, Sharon has come a long way to have this problem. He stated he respects everyone's opinion on the matter.

Mrs. Saylor asked the downtown merchants to call Holly Grande if they notice a specific downtown merchant or employees violating parking. Mr. Connelly added that Council's emails are posted on the website for contacting Council members directly. Mrs. Saylor thanked everyone for attending.

Melissa Phillips introduced herself and reported that the City received a small planning grant for downtown business. She stated developing downtown business has been a high priority of City Administration and they are aware of the existing deficits. There will be an informational breakfast on March 15 and Sherris Moreira has email addresses for notification. The grant will allow the City to bring in a third-party facilitator to assess the needs and coordinate efforts. Over the next year there will be more opportunities for discussion, and she invited anyone to call her with their thoughts.

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| ADJOURNMENT |
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Meeting adjourned at 7:08 P.M.

Motion: Mr. Lucas

Second: Mrs. Saylor

Vote: ✓ Mrs. Bundrant

✓ Mrs. Saylor

✓ Mr. Lucas

✓ Mr. Connelly

✓ Mr. James