

Town of Mansfield Parking Steering Committee for Storrs Center and Meeting of the signatories of the COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT for Parking Enforcement in and adjacent to Storrs Center Development, Mansfield, CT

**Special Meeting
Wednesday, October 21, 2015
Mansfield Downtown Partnership Office
23 Royce Circle**

5:00 PM

Minutes

Members Present: Karla Fox (Chair), Alex Marcellino, Dennis Stanavage, Mike Taylor

Ex-Officio Members and Staff Present: John Carrington, Matt Hart, Matt Joyce (by phone), Debbie Lastro, and Cynthia van Zelm

Guest: Bruce Silva, Superintendent, Region 19 School District

1. Call to Order

Chair Karla Fox called the meeting to order at 5:07 pm.

2. Remarks from the Chair

Ms. Fox said she believes the Committee needs to stay active, and that issues will come up as all Storrs Center commercial spaces are leased and the for-sale homes are built.

3. Discussion of Parking in Downtown

Cynthia van Zelm reviewed a few reports prepared by the LAZ Parking and Town staff. These reports included a report of the empty spaces in the parking garage at 10 am over the last week; a report of empty spots in the Dog Lane lot during the lunch and dinner hours over the last week; and tickets issued, paid, and appealed in the public and private lots, and on-street from July 1 through September 30 with comparisons from 2014 to 2015.

Ms. van Zelm said the availability for spaces in the garage for the public is much improved from about a month and a half ago when Oaks residents were parking below the gated area that is reserved for the public.

Debbie Lastro said the Oaks had expressed interest in more spots in the garage but she indicated that no decision should be made until Phase 2 is fully tenanted with commercial businesses. Matt Hart agreed.

Ms. van Zelm said the Dog Lane lot count showed that it is very full at the lunch and dinner time periods.

New Committee member Dennis Stanavage arrived and introductions were made by the group.

Ms. van Zelm reviewed the ticket information, noting that the number of appeals overall is about 16% of the tickets issued. She said revenue collection is approximately 65%. This should be closer to 75%. The Town is working with the ticketing vendor Complus to improve this percentage.

Ms. van Zelm said that Royce Circle generates the most tickets, likely due to parking in the CVS loading zone, the Health Center restricted spots, and cars in the bus stops.

Mr. Hart said the Town received a proposal from LAZ Parking to handle the administration for appeals as this has become a very labor intensive process for the part-time administrative assistant in the Resident Trooper's office. The goal is to make the appeals process as streamlined as possible. Hearings officers do review the appeals on-line for the most part. Mr. Hart will be reviewing the proposal.

Mike Taylor asked what the common defense is for people who receive appeals. Mr. Hart said some people are confused by the signs including at the Health Center, and in the loading zones. Ms. van Zelm said that there is confusion about the difference between Mr. Taylor's property (Storrs Commons) and Storrs Center, as well as between Storrs Center and the Oaks, with some people thinking the Oaks is the entire downtown.

Ms. Lastro said a valet parking service, and paid reserved spots in the parking garage (continuing what was done in the summer) were suggested to the Health Center but the Health Center did not pursue these options.

Mr. Taylor said he does not think there are enough parking spaces downtown in general, but his greatest concern is that there are not enough spots for the grab and go businesses, which are typically 30 minute spaces.

Mr. Taylor said the 7:30 am to 9:30 am time period is the largest crunch at Storrs Commons. He is now getting overflow traffic from Oaks residents or Oaks visitors, and from Brueggers. He is concerned how the opening of Dunkin Donuts and Gansett Wraps on Storrs Road adjacent to his property will exacerbate the problem. He has put up signage that says customers that park at his complex but walk off site, will be ticketed or towed.

Mr. Taylor offered a couple of solutions:

- Can Leyland and Wilder talk to their tenants to discourage customers from parking in other private lots? He said that Starbucks puts up a friendly sandwich board inside that asks that people only stay for a limited amount of time.

- Can the Oaks also notify their residents and staff to only use Storrs Commons spaces when there are patronizing the businesses at Storrs Commons?
- Could the Town look at additional sites for parking adjacent to the downtown?

Mr. Taylor said he would also evaluate his own staffing for enforcing parking on his property as well as review whether asking LAZ Parking for assistance would be beneficial.

Mr. Taylor asked if his employees could wear some type of vest or shirt to identify them as parking constables. He had heard from his employees that the police may frown on a vest because it may look like that person is a police or other official. Mr. Hart will follow-up with the Resident Trooper's office to see if they have any objection to a vest that reads "parking official" or verbiage to that effect.

Ms. Fox said these were some good suggestions and added that a lot more will come to light on parking once Wilbur Cross Way businesses are fully open.

Bruce Silva arrived at 5:50 pm.

Mr. Taylor asked if Leyland and Wilder's leases require where employees are to park. Ms. Lastro and Mr. Joyce will follow-up.

Mr. Silva said he and Mr. Stanavage had met with Mr. Hart and Ms. van Zelm to discuss parking at the high school. He said he does not want to ticket but is concerned about on-going encroachment in their spots during events (games, concerts, open house, etc.). There continue to be business employees and visitors to the downtown parking in spots after the high school gets out for the day and on the weekends. The high school also will increase its enforcement.

John Carrington asked whether metered parking was a possibility in Mr. Taylor's lot. Mr. Taylor said his leases require free parking. Ms. Lastro said the parking could still be free for a time period as the lot is set up now but it would be an incentive to leave after the designated time limits are up as one would either need to pay to stay longer or would be ticketed.

The Committee agreed that education needs to continue about the location of parking in the downtown.

4. Update on Bike Parking Downtown

Ms. van Zelm said she attended the last Bike Mansfield meeting. The Partnership/Town's new Transportation Coordinator Dee Goodrich will attend these meetings going forward. She said that Lon Hultgren with Bike Mansfield is still researching the idea of a bike corral in one of the parking spaces. It would be a flexible space that would convert back to a parking space as needed.

Ms. van Zelm said the bikes on Wilbur Cross Way and the surrounding buildings for Oaks residents should be in place by November.

Public bike racks have been purchased for Wilbur Cross Way but will not be located and put up until the spring once the location of more of the commercial tenants is determined.

5. Approval of Minutes from January 21, 2015, April 15, 2015, and July 15, 2015

Mike Taylor made a motion to approve the minutes from January 21, 2015; April 15, 2015; and July 15, 2015. Alex Marcellino seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

6. New Business

There was no new business. Ms. Fox asked that Old Business be added as an agenda item for future agendas.

7. Review of Meeting Dates in 2016

Given some of the feedback from property owners and the continued fit out of Storrs Center, the Committee agreed to continue to meet on a quarterly basis starting in January. Ms. van Zelm will send out meeting notices for 2016.

8. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

9. Adjourn

Mr. Marcellino made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Taylor seconded the motion. The motion was approved and the meeting adjourned at 6:16 pm.

Minutes taken by Cynthia van Zelm.