

MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORK SESSION OF SEPTEMBER 12, 2017

Mayor Strazdas called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The following Councilmembers were present: Richard Ford, Jim Pearson, Patricia M. Randall, Claudette Reid and Terry Urban, Mayor Pro Tem Nasim Ansari and Mayor Peter Strazdas. Also present were City Manager Larry Shaffer, Deputy City Manager Rob Boulis, Department of Public Services Director Rod Russell, Public Safety Director Nick Arnold and City Clerk James Hudson.

Mayor Strazdas introduced the topic of Discussion of the Winter Parking Ordinance, outlined the format of the meeting and deferred to City Manager Larry Shaffer, who prefaced the meeting with a review of what would be presented, including the cost of implementing a parking permit system, a discussion of current paradigms, and systems being utilized “out there” and some options should Council wish to pursue a different alternative to the current ordinance requirements. He indicated that they would receive information from Department of Public Services Director Rod Russell on snowplowing, some of the issues associated with on-street parking, and a summary of what other communities do for winter parking. He also indicated they would receive information from Public Safety Director Nick Arnold about how on-street parking affects public safety and present his recommendations.

Mr. Shaffer explained the Ordinance that was passed by City Council in December 2014 which sliced approximately two weeks off of the front end of the winter ban on on-street parking that reads: “It shall be unlawful for any person to park, allow to be parked or allow to remain standing, any motor vehicle on or within five feet from the main traveled portion of the street between the hours of 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., local time, from November 1 to April 15 of each year.” Sec. 78-2. - Parking (Ord. No. 01-12, 12-18-01; Ord. No. 14-10, 12-16-2014, eff. 1-3-2015). He used a chart to demonstrate some options that are available in this area that are being used throughout the State, reviewed some of the changes associated with many permit system options, and cited a figure of \$78,000 to cover administrative costs, the cost of the extra signage and the cost for one laborer for sign installation and maintenance. He also pointed out in order to maintain a sign program, Council would have to budget 10% of the cost or about \$8,000 per year, plus the cost of maintenance or someone to administer the sign program.

Councilmember Pearson asked why this permit process issue is coming up. Mr. Shaffer responded that there was discussion regarding off-street parking and the variety of mechanisms that can be deployed with regard to off-street parking, and that Council asked why not make it a Retreat item. He noted that permit parking is utilized in East Coast cities and University cities where parking is at a premium. He reviewed the alternative permits that might be considered, including: permits for residents with a Michigan Driver License and a local address, temporary parking permits, visitor parking permits, or parking just in front of your home, for example. He also explained other options such as a change in the parking restriction times,

parking on the odd or even sides of the street, automatic towing for violations, or a declaration of a snow emergency by the City for a specific time frame.

At the request of Mr. Shaffer, DPS Director Rod Russell reviewed the research performed by then Public Services Director Bill Deming in 2014 regarding odd/even day alternating streets side, that the City currently plows the major streets and local streets with one pass in each direction, and the change would require another pass for cleanup and more time and money. He also mentioned that possible consequences could be unhappy citizens owing to the increase in time and cost, potential property damage, citizen complaints regarding the methods used and the timing of the snow plow, and the effect on the response time for emergency response vehicles that will have to meander through to get to their destination. He listed some of the options utilized by some of the cities involved in the 2014 study, mentioned the potential conflict of the Fall Leaf Pick-up Program from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m., advocated the current program, but stressed the need for a safe and clean city. Discussion followed.

Councilmember Randall asked for statistical data for snow fall, when it happens and how much. She mentioned her discussion with a lady from Marquette, who indicated they have 44" less snow than ten years ago. Discussion followed. Mr. Russell explained that he did some work prior to this, but does not have that information with him. He disclosed that snow started earlier last year, analyzed it, and determined that the City was not going to get that much snow. By the end of the snow fall, he said the City was at 4" below the average snow fall last year. Discussion followed.

Mayor Strazdas invited Public Safety Director Nick Arnold to speak. Chief Arnold indicated that his concern with parking on the street is determined by the question, "Is it better to respond to houses or an emergency, both Fire and Ambulance?" He advocated that there be no parking on the street from a law enforcement standpoint and explained. He cited the problems of larceny, destruction of the cars, and the fact that bad guys can hide behind the cars. He stressed that seconds count, especially in an emergency, but indicated that Council should leave it the way it is because it does not hurt either way. Discussion followed regarding junk cars on the street, boat and trailer storage on the street and parking permits as a logistical nightmare. Discussion followed. Mr. Shaffer indicated parking programs are expensive; enforcement is every day: people complain about getting their car towed; plus, the time and expense of maintaining a signs program. He said it can be done, but does not feel it is justified when there are so few real concerns regarding this.

Mayor Strazdas asked Chief Arnold how aggressive is enforcement, and when there is no snow prediction on the front end of the season, what are the procedures. He responded for the entire timeframe last year, the Police wrote 65 tickets. He indicated that for the first couple of weeks, the Police put out notices to let the resident realize that the off- street parking restrictions are in effect and will be enforced eventually; then, the Police ease into enforcement. Discussion followed.

In response to Councilmember Pearson, Mr. Shaffer outlined a scenario where there may be more cars in a family than there is parking on the property, but if there is no snow, enforcing the Off-Street Parking Ordinance may not be meeting a public good. Discussion followed regarding permit parking on the property for winter snow parking; the single car garage – short single driveway issue; parked cars and bicycling; short snow fall seasons; getting all of the cars off of the street during a snow event through notice using all of the various media with the goal of making it better for citizens; the odd-even parking approach; narrow streets; a snow event on only one section of town; and working with your neighbors to share parking as needed.

Mayor Strazdas invited Kevin Hoffer, 10910 Poplar Bluff, to speak about his experiences with off street parking. He said he now has a three-stall garage, so it is not an issue anymore, but he rented a house for four or five years that had a one-car garage, one-lane driveway, and he had an 18 year-old and a 23 year-old; so, he had four cars and nowhere to park them. Discussion followed.

Council discussed getting notices out regarding snow emergencies, moving parked vehicles, and options regarding parking at City Hall, designated areas in the school parking lots or church parking lots. Mr. Shaffer explained that the City is trying to get a system up that will allow everyone to know where the snow plows are, and when the plow is going to be in the neighborhood to help the citizen be better informed. Discussion followed.

Mayor Strazdas summed up and indicated he felt there was a consensus to initiate an Administrative Review, that there is no need to change the ordinance, but a need to review the technology with DPS and IT and explained. Councilmember Pearson expressed his appreciation for the use of social media to let him know about snow issues. Councilmember Urban indicated Metro Transit uses an app to show where the buses are at all times. Mayor Strazdas expressed a preference to have citizens work together in neighborhood groups to fight crime and to encourage/foster neighbors to talk more because people solve their own problems.

ADJOURN: Mayor Strazdas summed up and adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

James R. Hudson, City Clerk