

APPROVED MINUTES of the
Special Meeting of the City Council of the City of
Rye held in City Hall on April 7, 2004 at 7:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

STEVEN OTIS, Mayor
FRANKLIN J. CHU (arrived at 8:50 P.M.)
MATTHEW FAHEY
DUNCAN HENNES
ROSAMOND LARR
HOWARD G. SEITZ
Councilmen

ABSENT: ROBERT S. CYPHER

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Otis called the meeting to order and invited the Council to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Mayor Otis called the roll; a quorum was present to conduct official city business.

3. Discussion of the installation of parking meters in the Central Business District

Mayor Otis said Councilman Seitz had proposed the idea of installing meter parking in the Central Business District (CBD) to 1) produce revenue and 2) find a way to allocate funds to improving the CBD. He said City Planner, Christian Miller had done a lot of research and was ready to present various options and staff recommendations to the Council.

Mr. Miller said the number of spaces in the CBD is approximately 500 with a certain percentage occupied by permit holders (Merchants). There is competition for the spaces, both long term and short term. The merchants pay (but some don't, so are, in effect, being subsidized); residents living in the CBD pay; the shopper is not required to pay anything. The central issue is whether the shoppers should be asked to pay, and if so, what would be the best system.

There are two types of meters to be considered: single space or multi-space (either pay and display or pay by number). Single space meters are more traditional. There are upgraded versions that have many capabilities for detection/ resetting, etc. However, single space meters require infrastructure work for installation; collection is redundant; and there are aesthetic concerns. Multi-space meters would require central boards in various locations in the lots. They would accept a variety of payments (including credit cards/prepaid cards/cash). They would

afford centralized collection and servicing; they have some detection capability; and would provide an improvement on enforcement. The pay by number type (rather than the pay and display which would require drivers to go back to their cars with a parking slip) would be more convenient to most shoppers.

Revenue Assumptions are based on 488 spaces. Assuming about 188 would be used on a given day by permit holders, an estimated 300 spaces could generate \$1/hour X 8 hours X 5 days/week or and extra \$340,000 revenue to the City per year. It does not assume any increase in parking enforcement revenue. It is recommended that a percentage of additional revenue be allocated for CBD improvements as there are a lot of needs and a coordinated approach is necessary.

Staff recommends the pay by number multi-space approach to be most appropriate for Rye. It would be relatively convenient, easier to collect, thereby enhancing enforcement with improved parking monitoring. There would be less aesthetic concerns and less impact on parking lot maintenance. No additional staff would be required. The City would be able to maintain current parking policies (merchant permits, for example). There are many alternative funding strategies for costs and a short-term, trial commitment could be made to this system without a great deal of start-up costs. Implementation of this option would take only a few weeks and have little impact on daily operations. George Mottarella, City Engineer, spoke in favor of the multi-space approach saying the biggest problem would be with plowing (it would take more time if meters were everywhere; the meters would get banged up if not protected and would lead to costly repairs). Staff also recommends not limiting parking on Purchase Street to 15 minutes. It is not enough time; would be unenforceable; and recent studies actually recommend increasing the time from 1 to 2 hours.

Mr. Miller asked for a consensus about what future direction to follow.

The Mayor opened the floor to discussion. Is this a good idea for Rye? What do you think about the options? Councilman Fahey asked about the impact on traffic flows? On business? On freeing up spots? *(The policing would be the same as now, but we would not have to police other areas in the same way. There would be no impact on traffic. The Merchants need to answer the impact on business question as the shoppers will be the most impacted, but most communities do charge).* Councilwoman Larr agreed everyone else has meters, but questioned if 2 hours is enough for some people, and said you could have as many as four meters on one stand if you went to single space metering. She suggested it would be inconvenient for mothers with small children to park/go pay/go back to their car. Mr. Miller said he was recommending the pay by number system which does not require going back to your car and was also recommending having several boards in each parking lot, all of which could be “fed” in many different ways (quarters not required).

Mayor Otis said the City needs to analyze the numbers carefully; that there needs to be a way to get the merchants to park further away; and he is concerned about adding aggravation to shoppers. *Jim Sullivan*, founder of the Rye Merchants Association, said the employees (particularly the part-timers) can't afford to pay for the merchant's parking permits and refuse to park far away (on Theodore Fremd, for example, where there are usually open spaces).

Councilman Hennes congratulated Mr. Miller on a fine report, and agreed that the Council should not rush to a decision, but hear what the public has to say as we continue to research the matter in terms of costs, installation, impact, experience in other communities, etc. He said he liked the central pay system for its convenience, cost and aesthetics and would like to explore putting in such a system on a trial basis for a year. He agreed that some of the revenue should go to the CBD, but was interested in seeing a list of its needs (vs. the rest of the City).

Councilman Seitz spoke in favor of the single “Smart Meter” approach, revealing that the company is a client and he has requested the Ethics Committee rule on how much input he should have on the discussion (over and above recusing himself on any vote). He thinks Smart Meters would permit more revenue/more turnover/costs can be tiered (more each extra hour)/more benefit to the Merchants. He likes no meters on Purchase Street, but recommends a 15-minute limit and feels we need to find a way to move the merchants away from the stores. Mr. Miller said if you go to single space meters you would have to change existing procedures (the merchant permit procedures) because it would be silly to install 500 meters and have permit holders in a large percentage of them all day. He also said the initial installation would be more costly as each pole would have to be wired in order to be “smart.” He agreed that any system can be “beaten” be vandalized or be a target for theft.

The Merchants commented as follows: *Chris Colalucci*, Country Store, said he had seen many parking changes over the years – all for the worse – and thought regardless of what the Council decided there would be no parking from 8 – 4. He agreed merchants and employees take up the closest spaces and the important thing is to create more spaces. He said meters will be an irritant to some, but if people know the money will go back to the district, it could be a positive thing. He is concerned with the turnover in the CBD and attributes it, at least in part, to lack of parking. *Katherine Parker*, Parker’s, agreed parking is getting worse (especially as more eateries arrive); and recommends looking into more parking rather than meters. She said the employee parking on weekdays (from the upstairs offices – the ground floor is restricted to retail) is the real problem as weekends are OK. *Sally Wright*, President of the Merchant’s Association, said the metering concept is in the long-term right direction, but would like to see a large percentage of the revenues allocated for additional parking. Mr. Miller reported the Fee-in-Lieu of Parking Fund (funded by businesses who contributed \$12,000 for each parking space they lacked) was established in the 1980’s, lasted for about 10 years and has about \$200,000 awaiting a plan. *Bob Byrne* asked if the enforcement revenue will go up (*likely*). *Robin Jovanovich* worried about the arrival of two new banks that traditionally have a lot of employees and customers.

(Councilman Chu arrived at 8:50 P.M.)

Next steps. The Mayor said the information (Mr. Miller’s memorandum/parking study/ other relevant documents) should be put on the web and relevant committees (Traffic and Transportation, Finance and Planning) should review the suggestion. Councilman Hennes said he was in favor of pushing the idea along of a central system, as a one-year trial, and would like more specific costs for centralized ticket systems. He asked if any of the Council disagreed with that direction. Only Mr. Seitz disagreed, saying he preferred the single space approach. The Council wanted more statistics. Professional staff will now focus on multi-space systems that might be done on a trial basis.

City Manager Shew thanked the staff who have been working on the project and said the homework would be done.

4. Adjournment

There is no further business to discuss, Councilman Hennes made a motion, seconded by Councilman Fahey and unanimously carried, to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan A. Morison
City Clerk