

City of Biddeford
Downtown Committee Meeting
January 31, 2023
{Meeting held in-person and via Zoom}

Chairman Whiting called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Present were Chairman Whiting, Mayor Casavant (Zoom), Councilor Doris Ortiz, Councilor Ortiz (Zoom), and Councilor Julian Schlaver.

Staff in attendance included Interim Police Chief JoAnne Fisk and COO Brian Phinney.

Approval of the Minutes

There were no minutes to approve.

Staff Update

Chairman Whiting congratulated Interim Police Chief JoAnne Fisk for her position and welcomed Councilor Julian Schlaver as a new council representative.

Discussion/Review

Item 4.1. - Bacon Street Handicapped/Loading Zone Space

Dr. Strassler - Requested disability parking for access to the Congregation Etz Chaim Synagogue and explained his concerns with the current parking situation.

Maureen King – Appreciated the need for a disability space but observed employees from other areas are parking on the street to avoid the pay-per-use lots in the area. She suggested a loading zone to be able to unload for drop offs and pick-ups.

Councilor Mills – Asked if there can be a loading zone and a disability space.

Interim Chief Fisk commented that properly signing the loading zone for the necessary times would be difficult.

Councilor Mills- For a better understanding of what days would be needed for disability parking.

Dr. Strassler – Responded that there is not a consistent time or day. Possible alternative is a loading zone with paper on dash showing they are associated with the Synagogue and would therefore not be ticketed.

Councilor Schlaver – Asked if short-term parking would be acceptable, such as a 15-minute space.

Dr. Strassler – No because if individuals are part of a rehearsing it would be an hour to one and one half hours at the site.

Councilor Ortiz – Recognized that a disability parking space would be difficult to monitor to ensure that it was only used for Synagogue use. Asked if 2-hr parking in handicap spot would be an option.

Interim Chief Fisk – Commented that disability parking should be specific to that purpose and not mixed with other provisions. Loading zones are restricted in time.

Councilor Mills - Asked Interim Chief Fisk to confirm that 8-5 Monday through Friday is typically the period of time assigned to loading zones unless otherwise requested.

Interim Chief Fisk – Commented that the characterization generally sounds correct but would need to look up the requirement.

COO Phinney – Offered comment that there is also a practical aspect to loading zones. The space on the sign is limited so generally the sign specific to certain dates and consistent times to avoid confusion and to serve suit the intended purpose for the zone. For example, to allow deliveries early in the morning or to coordinate outgoing shipping requirements during the day.

Councilor Schlaver – Made note of several disability parking spaces in the area. Asked if there is a sufficient number of spaces that would allow drop-off and then parking for retrieval of the vehicle later.

Dr. Strassler – Commented that he did not feel the disability parking in the area is really accessible to the situation at the Synagogue.

Councilor Schlaver – Offered clarification that he is trying to understand the distinction between loading zone needs and disability parking needs.

Dr. Schlaver – Commented that if he was to make the determination there would be two disability spaces based on current member needs. It would also be more appropriate to have disability parking than loading zone space.

Councilor Mills – Asked for clarification from Dr. Strassler about the “ask”; Councilor Mills’ understanding is a loading zone and two disability spaces.

Dr. Strassler – Wanted it known that he does not want to overreach, so the priority would be disability parking.

Chairman Schlaver – Asked Interim Chief Fisk if there is any concern with two spaces in the area.

Interim Chief Fisk – Commented that there isn’t really a density issue but there is also no guarantee that disability parking would be available for the Synagogue at specific times since they would be open to the public.

Maureen King – Offered her observation that changes to the parking program have caused employees to shift parking to the residential streets. Daytime parking has increased through about 4:00 causing her to conclude that the vehicles are associated with workers.

Councilor Schlaver – Supports creation of a disability spot in front of the Synagogue. Asked if a two-hour spot would be of benefit as well.

Dr. Strassler – Indicated that it would not really be beneficial because there is no guarantee the space would be available, but is willing to try anything to try to accommodate his community.

Chairman Schlaver – Entertain a motion establish disability parking in front of the Synagogue.

Councilor Mills as to amend by adding a loading zone, Monday through Friday, 8:00-5:00.

Chairman Schlaver – Asked Interim Chief Fisk if the motion is practical.

Interim Chief Fisk – Commented that the Department will enforce whatever the Committee put in place.

Mayor Casavant – Voiced concerns with loading zone for such a long period of time. It will result in a dead zone. Suggests starting with one disability parking space and see how that impacts the neighborhood.

Councilor Ortiz – Voiced support for disability parking but not in support of the loading zone. There are workers that use those spaces. Taking parking away in a low income area is a concern.

Motion to accept two disability space and a loading zone.

In favor: Councilor Mills

Opposed: Councilor Whiting, Councilor Ortiz, Councilor Schlaver, and mayor Casavant

Motion Fails

Motion by Mayor Casavant to accept the original order for one disability parking space.

Seconded by Councilor Mills

Vote – Unanimous in favor, motion carries.

Item 4. B – Preferred Monthly Meeting Date and Time

Councilor Whiting – Polled the committee members for a preferred meeting date and time with the understanding that if there is no business the scheduled meeting would be cancelled. After discussion a date was identified.

Motion by Mayor Casavant to establish a regular meeting date and time being the last Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m.

Seconded by Councilor Schlaver

Vote: Unanimous in favor, motion carries

Motion by Councilor Whiting to Adjourn

Seconded by Councilor Ortiz

Vote: Unanimous in favor, motion carries

Adjourn at 6:47 p.m.