

CITY COUNCIL

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Agenda Item No.: 13
Date: March 23, 2011

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
FROM: Charles Grimm, Assistant City Manager
SUBJECT: Downtown Parking Subcommittee Meeting

RECOMMENDATION:

Parking Requirements: The Downtown Parking Subcommittee is recommending that the City Council direct staff to process an amendment to the Downtown Specific Plan removing existing parking regulations for new and expanding businesses located within the Vehicle Parking District (as modified on the attached map).

Parking Enforcement: The Subcommittee is also recommending that parking enforcement in the Vehicle Parking District be eliminated on Grand Avenue and in the public lots. The no-enforcement policy would be in effect on a trial basis for a period of one year, with a status report coming back to Council in six months.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

A change to the parking regulations would create little or no immediate impact financially to the City. The intended impact would be to allow new businesses and business expansion to occur that couldn't happen under existing regulations. This could help to increase business in the area and also increase City revenue. Ultimately, if successful, there may be enough increase in demand that additional facilities could be needed.

With regards to the elimination of parking enforcement, the Police Department has estimated a yearly revenue loss of approximately \$66,000 from enforcement and a loss of approximately \$47,500 from cancelation of Downtown parking permits.

CORRELATION TO THE CITY COUNCIL ACTION PLAN

At the meeting for the Council Action Plan on February 2, 2011, the majority of Council members indicated they wanted to streamline City regulations and make it easier for businesses to locate in Escondido and specifically mentioned the need to look at Downtown parking regulations.

BACKGROUND:

The Downtown Parking Subcommittee (DPS) met on March 1 and considered a number of issues and alternatives regarding current parking requirements and enforcement in the area that make it difficult to locate new businesses or expand existing businesses. The DPS meeting was attended by DBA staff, several business owners and City staff representing several departments.

Parking Requirements: There was significant discussion regarding the existing parking requirements in the Downtown area. It was felt that most of these requirements prevented the development of new business or any kind of business expansion. A number of alternatives were considered for parking relief including the reduction of existing standards, the use of a "parking in-lieu" fee to help fund the purchase of new parking, the re-establishment of the parking credit system, a reduction of required parking for targeted uses (such as restaurants), or the total elimination of parking requirements in certain areas.

Following the discussion there appeared to be unanimous support within the group for the elimination of parking requirements in the area known as the Downtown Vehicle Parking District (VPD) which was modified slightly for this amendment (map attached). The modifications would actually expand the VPD to include the area between Center City Parkway and Ivy on the east, and between Valley Parkway and Second Avenue on the South. The DPS is recommending that Council direct staff to prepare the proper amendments to make this happen as quickly as possible.

OTHER DISCUSSION

Parking Enforcement: Out of the discussion regarding the Holiday parking standards it was suggested that the City eliminate enforcement altogether for the area in the modified Vehicle Parking District for a trial period of one year (with a six month review). The group discussed the positives and negatives of this action at length. The major issue that was identified as a possible negative was the concern that without regular enforcement this policy could create possible impacts for Grand Avenue merchants. The fear is that Downtown office employees would park their cars all day in front of Grand Avenue businesses. It was ultimately felt that the office workers could be educated to use the public lots leaving spaces open on Grand for the retail businesses. The DBA agreed to educate local businesses about directing their employees to park off of Grand Avenue. Under the recommendation staff would report back to Council in six months.

Holiday Parking: In November of last year the City Council approved a no-enforcement policy for parking on Grand Avenue and in the public lots Downtown. In addition, they also provided free parking on Valley Parkway and Second Avenue which Council has recently continued indefinitely. Based on positive feedback regarding the special Holiday parking regulations (implemented November 21 through January 1), the DBA completed a survey of businesses regarding the impact of the special regulations. The survey indicated that it was an over-whelming success with businesses wanting to repeat the program next year.

Diagonal Parking: The DPS also discussed the idea of going back to diagonal parking on Grand Avenue and in addition, looking at the possibility of using reverse diagonal parking (cars would pull by a space and then back in) similar to what is used currently in Santa Barbara. It was decided that if authorized by the Council, staff would perform additional study in this area and return with a report.

Transit: The meeting also included discussion regarding the possible relocation of transit buses on to adjacent streets as the DBA had received complaints regarding customer annoyance from these vehicles particularly those customers eating in restaurants with outside dining. Others felt this is part of the Downtown experience and were not as concerned. The DBA is going to talk to additional businesses and based on that information may officially request that the buses be moved in the future.

Loading Areas: There was also a feeling by some businesses that loading areas were needed in some parts of the Downtown. This was questioned by others due to the fact that there are a number of alleys that already serve this area. It was felt that if ultimately the buses were eliminated on Grand Avenue there may be some opportunity to use some of the transit stops for loading purposes.

In summary, the Downtown Parking Subcommittee is requesting that the City Council eliminate parking requirements within the Vehicle Parking District (as modified), eliminate parking enforcement on Grand Avenue and in public lots in the Downtown area, and direct staff to look into the possibility of reverting back to diagonal parking along Grand Avenue.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CG', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Charles Grimm
Assistant City Manager

Attachment: Vehicle Parking District Map

STUDY AREA FOR ELIMINATION OF PARKING REQUIREMENTS

