

Duluth Parking Commission
Sixtieth Meeting
7:30 a.m. Friday, March 16, 2018
City Council Chambers, Duluth City Hall

Members Present

- Andy Goldfine, President
- Noland Makowsky
- Karin Swor
- Michael Warsop, Vice President
- Em Westerlund

Members Absent

- Andy McDonald
- Jessica Sterle

Guests Present

- Carl Crawford, Human Rights Officer – City of Duluth
- Mark Bauer, Parking Operations Specialist – City of Duluth
- Theresa Bobula, Manager – At Sara’s Table
- Karen McTavish, Owner – McTavish Quilting Studio
- Doug Melander, Duluth Operations Manager – Interstate Parking Company, Inc.
- Jenn Reed Moses, Planner II – City of Duluth
- Steven Robertson, Senior Planner – City of Duluth

Approval of February 2018 meeting minutes

Commission Vice President Michael Warsop motioned to approve the minutes of the February 2018 Duluth Parking Commission meeting. Commissioner Em Westerlund seconded the motion, which was approved 5-0.

On-street ADA signage request

City of Duluth Parking Operations Specialist Mark Bauer proposed that an on-street ADA signage request be approved. He stated that he had reviewed the application and visited the property, verifying the accuracy of the application and the need for the on-street parking space and had consulted with the City of Duluth Commission on Disabilities. Commissioner Westerlund motioned that the request, related to 1324 North 57th Avenue West, be approved. Commissioner Warsop seconded the motion, which was approved 5-0.

Proposal to convert a parking lane on East 8th Street to a bicycle lane

Mr. Bauer introduced a proposal to convert the parking configuration on East 8th Street from 15th Avenue to 19th Avenue to north-side parking only to allow for a bicycle lane on the south side of the street. City of Duluth Planner II Jenn Reed Moses provided historical and other details regarding the proposal. Commissioner Swor inquired whether the area’s business owners had been involved in the discussion process. Ms. Moses stated that the City had conducted a public forum, press releases, and other meetings to gather public input on the proposal. She stated that the currently-proposed conversion was prescribed in the 2014 Duluth Bikeways Plan and was ultimately intended to connect with bikeways to the west and east of the 8th Street section. Commissioner Westerlund inquired into the timeline of the next phase of the bikeways project in the area, which Ms. Moses had indicated would include 19th Avenue East. Ms. Moses stated that she did not know when the next phase would occur. Commissioner Westerlund asked if the painting of the bike lanes and reconfiguration of the parking on the block could wait until the stakeholders that felt they had been omitted from being surveyed could be contacted. Ms. Moses stated that the Community Planning division does not typically perform stakeholder surveys and that City administration was ready to move the project forward. Commissioner Makowsky inquired whether the outlined two-lane bike lane could be reduced to one lane to save street width and accommodate parking. Ms. Moses stated that the full width was needed to accommodate the barrier required for a “protected” bike lane. McTavish Quilting Studio owner Karen McTavish stated that she was concerned for the welfare of the area businesses, which could be negatively affected by the adjustment in parking. At Sara’s Table Manager Theresa Bobula stated that a group promoting the bicycle lane plan had stated to her that business in the area would improve but that they did not provide any related data nor an estimated timeline for such improvement.

Ms. Bobula encouraged City staff to explore other alternatives for bicycle routes and added that VIP Pizza had also expressed concern about the plan. Commissioner Warsop inquired into the parking commission's approval authority regarding the proposal. Ms. Moses replied that the bicycle lane and parking adjustment would likely occur whether or not the proposal was approved by the commission. She added that in hindsight it would have been preferable for more off-street parking to have been included as part of the adjacent Chester Gardens development. Commissioner Westerlund inquired about plans to create a seasonal bicycle facility along the route. Ms. Moses stated that there had been discussions about creating a test summer facility but that it may not involve this bike route. Commissioner Makowsky stated that he did not support the proposal and would prefer to look at alternative options for the bicycle route. Commissioner Warsop motioned that the conversion plan be approved from 15th Avenue East to 18th Avenue East but exclude the 1800 East block, where the majority of area businesses were located. Commissioner Swor seconded the motion, which was approved 4-1 (Commissioner Makowsky dissenting).

Proposal to convert two meters on East Superior Street to a ten-minute drop-off zone

Mr. Bauer introduced a proposal to convert two single-space meters on the 200 block of East Superior Street to a ten-minute drop-off zone. He stated that the request for the zone had been generated by the manager of the Norshor Theater, who had expressed a need for the zone to accommodate pick-ups and drop-offs related to the recent re-opening of the theater. Mr. Bauer stated that he had conducted a survey of the area stakeholders and stated that support for the conversion of the two parking meters to a drop-off zone appeared unanimous among those contacted. Commissioner Swor inquired whether there was nearby ADA-designated parking. Mr. Bauer replied that there was an ADA stall directly to the east of the proposed conversion zone and that the ADA space would remain following the conversion. Commissioner Warsop motioned that the proposal be approved as presented. Commissioner Makowsky seconded the motion, which was approved 5-0.

Proposal to convert a no parking/bus drop-off zone on Pitt Street to a ten-minute drop-off zone

Mr. Bauer presented a proposal to convert a no parking zone, which had previously been used as a school bus drop-off zone, on the 4600 block of Pitt Street to a ten-minute drop-off zone. He stated that a representative of the adjacent St. Michael's School building had contacted him with the conversion request and had stated that the no parking zone had been created to allow for pick-ups and drop-offs for school buses serving the building when it was a school. Mr. Bauer stated that the building was now being operated as a day care facility and that, since the building's needs had changed, the building manager had requested that a ten-minute drop-off zone be established to allow for short term parking for parents or guardians to pick up children at the day care center. Commissioner Makowsky motioned that the proposal be approved as presented. Commissioner Warsop seconded the motion, which was approved 5-0.

Proposal to prohibit parking on portions of 31st Street South

Mr. Bauer introduced a proposal to prohibit parking on portions of 31st Street South. He stated that the party at 3102 Minnesota Avenue had initiated the request to prohibit parking in the area and that the City of Duluth's Community Planning and Engineering divisions, as well as the Attorney's Office, had all been involved in the resulting discussions. Mr. Bauer stated that the group had reached a consensus that the area at the eastern end of the roadway and on the south side of 31st Street should feature a parking prohibition to provide better access for emergency and other vehicles. He stated that he had been made aware that the resident of the neighboring property at 3101 Minnesota Avenue was in agreement with the proposal. Commissioner Warsop motioned that the proposal be approved as presented. Commissioner Makowsky seconded the motion, which was approved 5-0.

Off-street parking update

Interstate Parking Company Duluth Operations Manager Doug Melander provided an update on off-street parking operations. He stated that Interstate was preparing for the upcoming Superior Street reconstruction project by participating in meetings with area stakeholders and other parties in an effort to coordinate public communication. He stated that a DC, or "fast charging" electric vehicle charging station at Lake Place Lot had been inoperative for some time but had recently been repaired. Mr. Melander stated that the DC station appeared to be in the highest demand of the charging stations at the location. Commissioner Goldfine suggested that an analysis be performed regarding the advisability of adding DC charging stations to Lake Place Lot, in response to the high demand. Commissioner Warsop motioned that a study be performed by the parking division and Interstate Parking that included a utilization and demand analysis of the charging stations, a calculation of the return on investment should other charging stations at the lot be converted to DC stations, suggestions for locations at which non-DC stations could be added to parking lots or ramps, and an overall recommendation of the parking division. Commissioner Swor seconded the motion, which was approved 5-0. Mr. Melander concluded his remarks by stating that the final portion of the Hart District Ramp structural repairs project would soon take place and that Interstate would coordinate public messaging accordingly.

On-street parking update

Mr. Bauer provided an update on on-street parking operations. He stated that the City's Park Duluth mobile payment application continued to grow in usage and popularity. He stated that the parking division was currently studying various options for new on-street parking payment technology and that he would continue to provide the commission with information and recommendations as the process moved forward. Mr. Bauer stated that the parking division's staffing levels, which had been lower throughout most of 2017, had been brought back nearly to a full level, with one more position left to fill. In response to a commission request in a previous meeting, he provided the commissioners with a packet of information regarding on-street parking stall usage on the 300 block of West Superior Street, noting that the packet contained sample information from three spaces on the block for the month of March. He also provided the commissioners with a map that had been assembled by the City's Community Planning division that illustrated the locations and capacities of all lots and ramps in the downtown Duluth area.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Bauer
Parking Operations Specialist