



## **Parking Committee** **2011 Accomplishments**

### **2010 Accomplishments**

#### **Sunday Parking Fees**

As you may know, the City of Newark is facing a serious financial crisis. Like any good business in times of financial hardship, the City performed a comprehensive accounting of services provided Citywide, associated costs to provide those services, and revenues generated by them for discussion by the Council. A detailed analysis was completed for downtown business services. Information was provided for Council review including a summary of business services provided by location along with a map of the downtown district; a detailed description of services provided, with information about location and business type benefit differences; and finally, estimates of the costs associated with providing the services. At the Workshop, Council briefly debated cutting services and/or raising fees associated with them, but recognized the need for Downtown Newark Partnership (DNP) input before making any substantive decisions. Therefore, Council requested that the DNP Board consider the alternatives and make a recommendation for Council's consideration.

Upon review of services provided to downtown businesses and estimates of the costs associated with those services, the Downtown Newark Partnership Board recommended that the City begin charging for parking at downtown meters and in municipal lots on Sundays, beginning in 2010. The Board reasoned that this action would contribute significantly toward downtown services costs, and spread the financial burden over a larger group of people in a fair and equitable way. Based on this recommendation, an amendment to the parking meter ordinance was drafted requiring meter fees from 8 AM – 1 AM (our normal hours of operation, Monday – Saturday) on Sundays, and the matter deferred until further discussion about the impact of Sunday fees with the DNP Merchants and Parking Committees and affected churches could take place.

Two meetings of the DNP Merchants (11/02/09 and 12/02/09) and Parking (11/18/09 and 12/16/09) Committees were held to discuss the matter. These meetings were advertised to downtown Newark businesses via the DNP E-News You Can Use E-newsletter and the downtown block captain system. In addition, all DNP Meetings are open to the public and their agendas advertised in City Hall and on the DNP and City websites. In addition, previous to the DNP meetings, staff met with Pastor Palmer and the business manager of the Newark United Methodist Church (the church most impacted by the change) and discussed the matter with representatives of the Catholic and Baptist Churches downtown.

Based on these discussions, a revised and unanimously endorsed recommendation to begin to charge for parking on Sundays at 1 PM, rather than at 8 AM was developed. Subsequently, staff evaluated how the revised recommendation would impact estimated revenues and lot administration. In this regard, please note that a mid-day start up can be implemented logistically. In addition, while reducing the hours proposed for fee collection on Sundays will also reduce the estimated net income by a little more than \$29,000 annually, charging for

parking in municipal lots and meters on Sundays from 1 PM – 1 AM will still generate substantial estimated net revenues of approximately \$68,000 a year. The DNP Board, therefore, reviewed and approved the revised recommendation on January 14, 2010, and a revised amendment was prepared for Council consideration.

City Council approved the Sunday Parking Fees at its regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, February 22, 2010. Fees went into effect on April 1, 2010. The Parking Committee was instrumental in getting the word out to the public about the new Sunday fees. In addition to warnings being issued on Sundays during April, a sticker was designed for meters alerting parkers to the new fees. These stickers were installed on every meter citywide.

## **Free Parking Promotions**

Working with other committees of the DNP, especially the Merchants and Events Committees, as well as the City Manager's Office and the Newark Police Department, the Parking Committee coordinated free parking for city events, as well as around the holidays. Free parking encourages out of town visitors to come enjoy Newark and helps downtown businesses draw in customers. Free parking is provided for special events as well as the holiday season. Over the 2009 holiday season, the city provided free parking over Thanksgiving weekend, Wednesdays (Wonderful Winter Wednesdays) in December, for Winterfest, as well as every day from mid-December to the end of the year, so people could enjoy holiday shopping and festivities. The free parking dates provide a sales boost for downtown businesses, and encourage people to shop in downtown Newark for the holiday season.

In 2010, with the City's financial crisis on everyone's mind, the Parking Committee set about re-evaluating the downtown free parking promotions. Committee members discussed the matter over several meetings, surveyed the Merchants Committee membership and discussed the matter with City staff responsible for special events. Eventually, the Committee recommended a modified free parking promotional schedule, which was endorsed by the Downtown Newark Partnership Board.

## **FREE PARKING DURING SPECIAL EVENTS**

1. Restaurant Week – 1/18/10 - 1/24/10 – The recommendation was not to provide free parking for Restaurant Week. Previously we provided free parking validation with meal purchase. This practice sometimes caused confusion – and its elimination did not seem to have a negative impact on event.
2. Newark's Wine & Dine Downtown – 3/27/10. The Wine & Dine Planning committee suggested easing into the removal of free parking this year by advertising it (free parking) only in municipal lots and charging at meters. This approach did not have a negative impact on the event.
3. Spring Concerts – Concerts are held on Thursday evenings from 7 -8 PM in May and June. In past years, we offered parking validation for concert attendees who parked in Lot #3. Few people took advantage of this offer, and the recommendation was to do away with it without a negative impact on the event(s).
4. Newark Nite – 6/5/10. Since parking is prohibited on street (meters) and cars are blocked into municipal lots for its duration, the Committee recommended continuation of free parking for the event.

5. Food & Brew Fest – 7/24/10 – as with the Wine & Dine event, the Committee recommended easing into the removal of free parking by providing free parking in municipal lots only.
6. Community Day – 9/19/10. This event is always held on a Sunday – when, in the past, parking was free. With the change to Sunday parking fees, the committee discussed the matter with City staff and determined that the removal of free parking in municipal lots would cause an issue for the event vendors, who were already facing increased fees. The committee recommended charging for parking after the event ended.
7. Main Street Mile – 10/2/10. Because parking is prohibited on street and parking lot exiting will be restricted during the event, staff suggested free parking during the race only.
8. Taste of Newark - 10/3/10. The Committee consulted with Mayor Funk, Taste of Newark host, regarding charging for parking during the event, and he was not concerned that it would have a negative impact on the event. Therefore, the city began charging for parking at 1 PM that day. No complaints were encountered.
9. Halloween Parade – 10/24/10 – Since parking is prohibited on street (meters) and cars are blocked into municipal lots for its duration, the Committee recommended continuation of free parking for the event.
10. Winterfest, 12/3 - usually the City provides free parking at meters and in municipal lots from 6 PM on for Winterfest. The Parking Committee, consulted with the Merchants' Committee, which did not see free parking as a driving force for the event. Therefore, free parking will not be provided for this year's Winterfest event.
11. Wonderful Winter Wednesdays – as noted in the Merchant Committee section of this report, free parking for Wonderful Winter Wednesdays will not be available this year
12. Holiday Free Parking – all committees felt very strongly that free parking from the last day of UD finals through the Christmas holiday was vitally important to the success of the holiday shopping season downtown. There was some debate as to whether this promotion should be extended through the New Year. Eventually, it was decided to provide free parking from the last day of UD finals through December 26, 2010.

Therefore, free parking promotions are planned for 2010 on Thanksgiving and Black Friday and all day every day from 6 PM on Friday, December 1, 2010 (the last day of UD exams) until Monday, December 26, 2010.

### **Improvements to Existing Lots**

The Parking Committee is continually working on ways to improve the capacity and efficiency of our existing lots. One of the ways they do this is to work with the City to make sure the lots are well maintained.

This summer Lot #1 was completely repaved and restriped, and some areas of concern in Lot #3 were addressed through the City's Capital Improvement Streets contracted. The inclusion in the City contract generated considerable cost savings to the Parking Division and ensured a coordinated and efficient effort. The result was a repaving contract which resulted in very little disruption to parking lot operations this summer. It also resulted in considerable aesthetic improvements to the lots.

### **Validation Program Improvements**

The Committee, in cooperation with the Merchants Committee, designed and ordered new

decals to identify businesses that validate customer parking in Municipal lots downtown last year.

As a follow up the Committee developed a plan to approach businesses which do not currently validate with information about the program. What the Committee found was that many businesses did not understand the program, or were misinformed about how it operates. The Committee developed the flyer below for downtown businesses:

## **DOWNTOWN NEWARK PARKING VALIDATION PROGRAM**

### **What is it?**

The Downtown Newark Validation program allows YOUR customers to park for FREE in municipal “pay to park” lots. The free parking is subsidized through a partnership between the City of Newark and your business. In other words, the City sponsors 50% of the required parking fee and you sponsor the other 50% - and your customer parks for FREE!

### **How does it work?**

The Downtown Parking Office supplies your business with validation coupons specific to your business. Validation coupons are available in \$.50 (one half hour fee) and \$1.00 (an hour) increments – you choose which is best for your business. When one of your customers uses a validation coupon from your store as payment towards a parking fee in a City lot, the use is registered in the Downtown Parking Office, and you will be billed for one-half of the cost of the validation used. For example, if you supply a customer a \$.50 coupon, your portion of the free parking charge is \$.25. The Parking Office sends validation bills out once a month to frequently validating businesses, and less often for those businesses which only validate occasionally. (The office will not send out a validation bill for less than \$5).

In addition to supplying validation coupons (at no cost to your business until they are actually used by one of your customers), the Parking Office will also supply you with window stickers identifying your business as one that validates parking and list your business on the Downtown Newark and City websites as a validating business. In addition, the Downtown Newark Partnership is planning an extensive advertising campaign focused on the validation program, and your business will be included in them. The first of these ads was in the June issue of Delaware Today. More ads will follow.

### **Why should my business participate in the Validation Program?**

- YOUR customers park for FREE!
- It doesn't cost you anything until YOUR customer actually uses a validation coupon from YOUR store – and at that it only costs you one half of the value of the validation!
- There is no charge to participate in the program (no overhead) – you just pay ½ of the parking used by your customer!
- There is no paying up front for stickers that may or may not get used by your customers – coupons are provided free of charge and you are billed as they are used!
- Free advertising for your business!
- Free web listing for your business!
- Free window stickers!
- You only need validate parking for those who actually purchase something at your business – and at that, you need only supply a ½ hour of parking (\$.25 cost to you) to be a validating business!
- You will not be billed for validations until you reach a threshold of \$5 in validation fees.

- Even if you are not close to a municipal lot, you may have a customer who has parked in a lot and would appreciate validation – and if not, you can take advantage of the free advertising.
- You will help us get the message out about parking in off-street lots as an alternative to tying up premium metered spaces and risking a ticket.
- You will help dispel the myth that Downtown Newark is not a friendly place to park.

### **How do I become a participating business?**

It's easy. Call Downtown Parking Administrator Marvin Howard at 302-366-7155 or e-mail him at [mhoward@newark.de.us](mailto:mhoward@newark.de.us) and he will answer any questions you may have, and if you are interested, set you up in the Downtown Newark Parking Validation Program. Questions may also be directed to Assistant Planning & Development Director/DNP Administrator Maureen Feeney Roser at [mfroser@newark.de.us](mailto:mfroser@newark.de.us) or 302-366-7155

The Parking Committee worked with the Merchants Committee to have the flyers included in the Block Captain distributions and with the Economic Enhancement Committee to include the information in Downtown Newark Partnership's E-News You Can Use E-Newsletter. Finally, members of the Parking Committee visited businesses to encourage participation. The result is impressive – 12 businesses were added to the list of validating businesses. Therefore, we now have 61 businesses participating in the program, a 20% increase over the previous year!