



Memorandum

To: Town Council
From: Community Resources Committee, Mandi Jo Hanneke, Chair
Date: January 8, 2020
Re: Report on DPWG Priority Recommendations

On November 18, 2019, the Town Council voted to refer the Downtown Parking Working Group's Priority Recommendations to CRC for a report back on those recommendations within 90 days.

The Downtown Parking Working Group, in its Memorandum to the Town Manager on November 14, 2019, recommended three key strategies that the Town prioritize immediately. They are:

1. Create a dedicated parking management position in charge of all transportation policy, planning and implementation (Strategy 1A).
2. Create a dedicated funding source to pay for downtown parking and transportation improvements.
3. Implement high visibility and consistent signage in key locations (Strategy 7A) and update the Town's parking webpage to be more user-friendly (see Key Action 1.B.5).

CRC has discussed these recommendations at three separate meetings. As part of discussions, CRC has spoken with Economic Development Director Geoff Kravitz, Chair of the dissolved Downtown Parking Working Group Christine Gray-Mullen, and Comptroller Sonia Aldrich in order to get a better understanding of the recommendations, parking in general, and to help answer questions CRC members had.

Based on the information received and the discussions that ensued, **CRC by a unanimous vote recommends the Town Council accept the recommendation of the Downtown Parking Working Group through the setting of Town Manager Goals. It also recommends the Council refer to the Finance Committee to make a recommendation regarding the minimum percentage of the Transportation Fund that should be dedicated to improvements and parking in the downtown.**

This report addresses each of the priority recommendations separately. CRC recognizes that the current budget guidelines for this year include working with the Manager "to consider the needs, costs, challenges, and benefits of addressing some important unmet needs" with the fifth identified unmet need being moving forward with the DPWG recommendations. Therefore, our report supports the Council's current budget guidelines on these recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Create a dedicated parking management position in charge of all transportation policy, planning and implementation (Strategy 1A).



CRC believes that Amherst needs to be better organized regarding parking issues. Currently, multiple staff members have different responsibilities related to parking. Implementing this recommendation would create more clarity and ensure that parking matters addressed in a coordinated manner. And, given how often Councilors hear from constituents regarding parking issues, creating a single point of contact for residents seems logical.

Because implementation of this recommendation would fall under the Manager's executive and budget authority, CRC recommends including this recommendation in the Manager's goals for the year and recognizes it is consistent with the Council Budget Guidelines.

Recommendation 2: Create a dedicated funding source to pay for downtown parking and transportation improvements.

This is the recommendation CRC struggled with the most. Through many discussions, CRC looked into what the current Transportation Fund pays for and where it receives revenues. CRC also discussed the difference between a parking benefits district and a transportation fund, including what expenses a transportation fund can pay for that a parking benefits district cannot.

Currently, Amherst's Transportation Fund receives revenue from parking fees and permits and parking violations. Parking fees and permits are nearly all received in the downtown area. The only exception at this time is the meters on Olympia Drive. The Transportation Fund budget is approximately \$1.1 million per year.

The Transportation Fund pays for expenses for personnel (enforcement officers, portions of the Economic Development Director and Procurement officer salaries, and benefits), PVTa surcharges, Valley BikeShare fees that aren't covered by sponsorships (currently, fully covered by sponsorships), the Town's BID Assessment, meter and kiosk maintenance, and parking lot improvements (Amherst Cinema lot, and potentially North Common lot). Of these expenses, portions of the PVTa surcharge (routes that don't go through downtown), Valley BikeShare expenses for locations outside of downtown, and maintenance and enforcement for Olympia Drive meters aren't invested in downtown.

CRC recommends that the Transportation Fund remain in place and that a parking benefits district not be created. Under the law, a transportation fund has more flexibility than a parking benefits district, and CRC believes this flexibility is important. However, CRC recommends dedicating a minimum percentage of the Transportation Fund to downtown parking and transportation improvements. It believes this is important in order to ensure that the funds raised in downtown are spent in downtown. CRC does not believe its task is to recommend a specific percentage. Therefore, it asks that the Council refer further study of this issue to Finance for making a recommendation on the percentage to the Town Manager through future budget guidelines.

Because final implementation of this recommendation would fall under the Manager's budget authority, CRC recognizes that it is consistent with the Council's Budget Guidelines.



Recommendation 3: Implement high visibility and consistent signage in key locations (Strategy 7A) and update the Town's parking webpage to be more user-friendly (see Key Action 1.B.5).

CRC recognizes this is an important strategy for making Amherst more welcoming to visitors and new residents. CRC also recognizes that this strategy sounds easier to implement than it likely is. But, CRC believes that if a dedicated parking management position is created, implementing this strategy becomes easier.

CRC discussed that there is a real need for the names of parking locations to be consistent across platforms – the name on the physical sign needs to match the name in ParkMobile, on the website, and on the kiosk. Further, residents regularly have problems finding the number for ParkMobile in order to pay. Implementation of this strategy could correct these issues.

Because final implementation of this recommendation would fall under the Manager's executive and budget authority, CRC recommends including this recommendation in the Manager's goals for the year and recognizes it is consistent with the Council Budget Guidelines.