



## **Parking Advisory Committee**

Date: November 19, 2021

Time: 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation

### **Minutes**

In Attendance: Ali Carter, Daniel Amstutz, Adam Chapdelaine, Leland Stein, Mike Rademacher, Melissa Laube, Corey Rateau, Julia Mirak, John Hurd.

#### **1. Greetings and introductions, notice regarding online meetings.**

Daniel Amstutz explained that the Committee is holding a virtual meeting as allowed by state law to continue to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Governor Baker had signed an Executive Order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic allowing virtual meetings, which suspended the usual Open Meeting Law requirement that a quorum of committee members be physically present in order to hold an official committee meeting. The provisions of this Executive Order have been extended by the Legislature. Amstutz confirmed the committee members in attendance for the meeting.

#### **2. Approval of the minutes for the October 27, 2021 meeting.**

Meeting minutes were approved.

#### **3. Broadway Plaza Construction Update.**

Mike Rademacher said that Verizon is continuing to splice their fiber optic cable from the old duct to the new duct. As a result, the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA) had advised that they will likely not begin their work until January. However, this is not expected to impact the final completion of their work and the restoration of Broadway Plaza, which would not have happened until spring anyway. Amstutz asked about Verizon's work to splice the fiber optic cable and how they do that work. Rademacher explained that the splicing is the second phase of the work and takes place in manholes such that they do not need to dig into the pavement any further.

**4. Treasurer's Office updates: parking meter revenues and Parking Benefits District (PBD) financial information.**

Amstutz noted that Phyllis Marshall is not able to attend the meeting today. However, she sent an updated spreadsheet of the PBD information and parking meter revenues and provided some comments on the sheet to be shared with the committee. The expenses for IPS related to the credit cards, gateway, and system has been adjusted down to about \$25,585 (down from almost \$42,000 shown in the month previous). The note from Marshall was that this new number is the actual expenses while the previous number was not correct because it had included the encumbrances. A couple of other numbers were adjusted, as well as the increase to the FY22 unallocated amount to almost \$600,000.

Adam Chapdelaine asked for feedback from committee members on whether they think parking in the Center is still lower than average compared to pre-pandemic levels – if the revenues are reflecting the low numbers of people parking. John Hurd said he has generally not had difficulty finding parking in the Center except during evening peak periods when people are going out to dinner. Ali Carter said the parklets taking up on-street metered parking in the Center may have made a dent in the total revenues, but other parking areas in the Center aren't at capacity and it wouldn't fully explain the difference in revenues from pre-pandemic levels. It's likely that people are still staying home. Corey Rateau said another factor is that many of the parking meters have not been working, including the new meters on Broadway between Franklin and Webster Street. The meters in the Russell Common Lot have also continued to have issues, so APD has not always been enforcing the metered parking when they know the meters are down. When the meters are back to full functionality the revenues should increase as well. The Treasurer has been looking at different vendors that can service the specific meter heads that we have. Amstutz noted that Marshall had sent a note saying she is awaiting proposals from a different vendor and from IPS. She also noted that they will need funds for FY2022 to upgrade the wireless technology in the parking meters before the end of December of 2022. Rateau explained that this has to do with the sunseting of the 3G wireless technology by Verizon. About \$31,000 is needed additionally from the unallocated funding amount to cover the costs of the technology upgrades. Leland Stein added that parking on Medford Street seems to be back to pre-pandemic levels most of the time with school back in session and other businesses operating again.

The committee discussed some of the numbers on the spreadsheet but needed clarification from the Treasurer to explain them.

**5. FY 2023 PBD funds discussion – project ideas and funds available.**

Amstutz began the discussion by asking Chapdelaine if it is still correct to assume that about \$200,000 is available to program for FY 2023 from the PBD fund. Chapdelaine confirmed this is the case, given the unallocated amount currently in the fund and understanding revenues are still lower than in pre-pandemic times. He said they could start from the list of proposed projects and priorities that Julia Mirak sent around on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce. Mirak went over correspondence from the Chamber to the Town regarding the need for beautification in public spaces to help with economic development in Arlington. A Beautification Committee has been created at the Chamber to discuss these issues. She said a dedicated employee for the Center to water, weed, and collect trash is needed. Rademacher explained that DPW has an employee to collect trash all along Mass Ave, not specifically dedicated to the Center. Carter noted that these funds are restricted to Arlington Center within the PBD geographic area, essentially where parking meters are located. Mirak agreed that this is the area she would like to focus on. She noted other priorities for beautification including flags, hanging baskets and flowers, and holiday lights. Rademacher noted they are working on holiday lights for Whittemore Park and the Memorial Park, and they will be ready for the holiday season. He is interested in getting holiday lights on light poles but that requires additional infrastructure to be installed and it's not clear what that cost is. Mirak asked about a water source for watering plants at Broadway Plaza. Rademacher explained that this was determined to be infeasible during the discussion about renovating the Plaza, but they will be putting in planters that will be able to hold water for long periods of time to reduce the amount of watering needed. DPW will do this task or hire a contractor for it. Mirak brought up landscaping needs in the median strips along the roadways as well as the Russell Common parking lot. A long-term plan for beautification would be helpful. Other projects she mentioned included storefront upgrades, civic engagement, signage, and more sidewalk upgrades. She will need to get pricing information for these to help with the Committee's decision-making.

Chapdelaine asked Rademacher how he might approach some of these requests when it comes to staffing. Rademacher said some tasks are seasonal and it may be hard to dedicate a single person to several different tasks. A contractor may be a better approach. Chapdelaine asked about adding outlets to the light poles and hanging baskets or flags to the poles. Rademacher said he could investigate the lighting issue; for baskets or flags, he's not sure if the existing poles could hold them and would need to do some research on location and maintenance. Mirak asked if they could get pricing for landscaping in the Center. Chapdelaine said they could find out more about how they could do this with a new contract or an existing contractor. Rademacher said

weeding tends to be very labor-intensive and better infrastructure should be considered as well. The Committee discussed the next meeting date and time and noted staff would work on getting information for the next meeting.

**6. PaybyPhone/mobile parking payment update.**

Amstutz said he posted data from the PaybyPhone backend on month-by-month usage and revenues. PaybyPhone continues to be successful and popular in town. In January they will have a year's worth of data to analyze and track its usage. Rateau noted that he worked with PaybyPhone recently to allow for their parking sessions to be started before 8 AM (when meter collections begin) so that people can start this going if they need to start parking earlier. People can start their session but they won't be charged until 8 AM. This seemed to be an issue mainly with the multi-space meters.

**7. Set next committee meeting date and time.**

Meeting members agreed to hold the next meeting on Friday, December 17 at 11 AM.

**8. Any other business.**

Amstutz showed a map of the geographic area of the PBD. The PBD funds can be spent within this area, which mainly covers the locations where parking meters exist in the Center. The boundary of the PBD would need to be adjusted to add locations like the medians on Mystic Street and the stretch of Broadway between Franklin Street and Webster Street where on-street parking meters have been added. Chapdelaine asked Amstutz to return to the next meeting with a proposal that the Committee could review. Rateau noted that parking regulations were changed on a few other streets like Whittemore Street and Avon Place and that they could be considered for inclusion in the PBD since it does impact parking in the rest of the Center. Amstutz said he will update the map for discussion at the next meeting.

Mirak asked if a general update on the status of parking meters could be included at the next meeting. Rateau said they are aware of what is working and not working, and in general there might be 20 single-space meters down at any one time. Staff are staying on top of it, although it depends on when they get parts to fix the meters. As noted earlier, they are working on addressing the modem issue with the meters as well.

**9. Adjourn.**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 PM.