



**MINUTES
YAKIMA CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION
January 23, 2024
Bank of America Building - 101 N 2nd Street, Yakima, WA
5:30 p.m.**

1. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Patricia Byers presiding; Assistant Mayor Matt Brown and Councilmembers Reedy Berg, Janice Deccio, Rick Glenn, Danny Herrera and Leo Roy

Staff: Interim City Manager Dave Zabell, Assistant City Manager Rosylen Oglesby, City Attorney Sara Watkins, City Clerk Rosalinda Ibarra, and Deputy City Clerk Brandy Bradford

2. Public comment - Anyone wishing to speak during public comment can fill out a slip and hand it to the City Clerk.

Assistant Mayor Brown opened the work session with audience participation and encouraged ideas and suggestions regarding the downtown parking situation.

Michelle Emmons, downtown business owner of Vintage Me Boutique, inquired about the possibility of raising sales tax and shared frustration regarding excessive cost of monthly parking passes, especially for part-time employees.

Amanda Evans, downtown business owner of Healing Hands Massage, spoke against the two-hour parking time limit as many of her customer services are 90-minutes to 2 hours. She suggested additional taxes or additional fees for downtown business licenses to support parking.

Mark Peterson, County resident, former downtown business owner and current downtown property owner, spoke against City management and staff's ability to manage downtown needs including public safety, economic development, downtown parking and snow removal.

Rebecca Gibbs, Yakima resident and downtown business owner of Soul Seeker, noted that there's no shortage of parking in the downtown area. She expressed interest in fundraising opportunities or consultants to help change the perception of the area.

Corie Ratliff, downtown business owner of Mama Corie's Kitchen, expressed frustrations with the deteriorating conditions of the downtown area, the City's inability to maintain it, and the street parking spaces being occupied by County employees.

Raul Martinez, Yakima resident, suggested increasing the parking time limits and offering dynamic pricing as possible solutions. He highlighted the importance of including all stakeholders that will be affected by any changes.

Ben Hittle, owner and resident of downtown property, provided background information about City Manager Harrison's presentation regarding the downtown parking analysis recommendations of RCW Consulting at the DAY breakfast meeting in fall of 2022. Downtown property owners Mann, Hittle, and Mercy came up with some of the parking rules currently in place. Moving forward, Mr. Hittle suggested implementing options already available through the enforcement software system being used by YPD by having the capability to add more time and charge/pay for additional hours.

Evan Belfiglio, Yakima resident, mentioned that downtown businesses experienced slower service and less business overall due to parking enforcement. He stated there's plenty of parking spaces available but people do not want to drive to the downtown area and there is not enough alternative transportation options. He suggested increasing time limits, lowering prices for monthly parking passes for employees.

Philip Rush, downtown business owner and resident, has experienced a drop in business following the parking enforcement actions as people don't want to come downtown and not enough information regarding enforcement times.

Rick Devilla, City resident and downtown business owner, stated his business purchased parking passes for their employees and reported employees were receiving parking tickets even after showing they had a valid paid parking permit. Mr. Devilla suggested extending the moratorium until a new plan is established and supported by the community.

Mark Shervey, City resident and downtown business owner, didn't believe there was a problem with downtown parking until the City had a budget shortfall. Also noted a drop in sales due to the recent enforcement of parking. The current solution is stifling growth in the downtown area. He believes that extending the moratorium will allow sales to go back up.

Bryan Martinez, Yakima resident, questioned what kind of community Council is trying to build. Employees of downtown businesses should not subsidize the parking for the community. He noted a lack of alternative transportation in Yakima such as inadequate bike infrastructure and a limited transit system. He also agreed with the dynamic pricing suggestion and use of parking meters.

Joe Mann, downtown property and business owner, provided response to question regarding how the \$50 monthly permit fee was decided. Mr. Mann provided historical information regarding downtown parking lots and inquired as to how much City employees pay for parking.

Kenton Gartrell, City resident, suggested that the Planning Commission review this issue and provide recommendations to City Council. He encouraged the use of recycled materials made in Yakima as a funding mechanism to help pay for parking lots and fix roads.

Kennedy Wilson-Avalos, General Manager of EZ Tiger, commented that the cost of a parking pass is too expensive for downtown employees, the two-hour limit is limited, the parking ticket is too high. She suggested minimum fees for patrons of the downtown area, exemptions for minimum wage workers, and dynamic pricing options. She also pointed out problems with unhoused and criminal behavior causing damage and disruption to businesses.

Alex Durrin, Alexandra's on 2nd, reported purchasing \$5000 worth of parking passes for employees and not able to roll those forward or receive a refund when the moratorium was placed. She expressed lack of trust with City as being the largest problem with parking. Also suggested extending the moratorium for parking until new plan is in place, better options for passholders and increased law enforcement to address safety concerns, and agreed with a dynamic pricing model.

Noemi Sanchez, downtown resident and employee, commented that minimum wage employees cannot afford parking passes to live and/or work; unpaid tickets going to collections is contributing to keeping low wage residents further into poverty. She also noted the lack of parking enforcement notices in Spanish.

Jeanna Hernandez, spoke about the City's responsibility to provide basic services such as water, sewer, garbage, transportation and investing in the community is necessary. She stated that the budget process should be more open and transparent to community and suggested private/public partnerships for parking lot maintenance.

Michael Morrison, expressed an increased need for housing and services for unhoused individuals in the community. He suggested building relationships with private parking garage owners to increase the parking availability and increase the communication efforts about future parking plans prior to implementation.

Dennis Rose, downtown resident and business owner, expressed there's an image problem with the downtown area regarding safety and noted that parking is a symptom of that problem.

Cindy Simmons, talked about the public trust with the City and asked for improved transparency, addressing safety issues from the unhoused population. She favored the idea of fundraisers, community events and suggested a lottery for monthly parking passes for employees.

Gen Ramirez, Selah resident, commented about the lack of trust and transparency between the City and the public and willingness to contribute towards parking lot maintenance.

Dimitri Ray, owner of the Alignment Company, stated that the cost of monthly passes is too high and should be decreased. He doesn't agree with increasing taxes, and highlighted the importance of improving Yakima's image. He suggested providing incentives for business owners and having community events as a business driver for the downtown community.

Charlie Robin, CEO of Capitol Theater, noted that the parking issues in Yakima are more about proximity and not lack of parking. He expressed concerns about safety in the downtown area and suggested the creation of a creative district as a driver of downtown improvements including incentives to raise revenues. Mr. Robins acknowledged the great staff members of the City of Yakima.

3. Downtown Parking Enforcement Moratorium

In response to the downtown parking enforcement moratorium placed on December 12, 2023, Councilmembers discussed thoughts after hearing from the community. Councilmember Deccio agreed with addressing the public safety and image problem.

Councilmember Glenn expressed interest in building relationships with community members to have more successful businesses downtown. Councilmember Herrera favored more community events and community involvement. Councilmember Berg suggested extending the moratorium, building the trust and transparency image, and addressing the parking fees. Councilmember Roy wants to work towards providing free downtown parking and looking at public/private partnerships to maintain the parking lots. Assistant Mayor Brown supported the idea of pausing the enforcement until a more solid solution has been identified. Mayor Byers thanked the community for attending and sharing their feelings and concerns regarding parking and other issues. After discussion,

MOTION: Brown moved and Berg seconded to direct staff to prepare a resolution for the next business meeting to extend the downtown parking moratorium for 60 days. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

4. Adjournment

MOTION: Brown moved and Deccio seconded to adjourn to the next Council regular meeting on February 6, 2024, beginning with Executive Session at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall. The motion carried by unanimous vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

CERTIFICATION

READ AND CERTIFIED ACCURATE BY

COUNCIL MEMBER DATE

COUNCIL MEMBER DATE

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK

MAYOR

