



NORWALK PARKING AUTHORITY

Press Release

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Parking Authority Provides Tax Relief, Improves Services

Prior to the creation of the Parking Authority, taxpayers were subsidizing parking operations an average of \$450,000 per year. That figure, coupled with the annual \$650,000 debt service for the Maritime Garage, which was constructed in 2003, would have pushed the annual parking subsidy above \$1 million. Today, black ink flows on the pages of the Parking Authority's budget and taxpayers are no longer supplementing the costs of maintaining and operating the municipal parking system.

Instead, city officials are putting that money to better use, "It frees up financial capacity and debt capacity so the city can undertake other necessary improvements. So, instead of having taxpayers subsidize the debt service on the Maritime Garage and other improvements to parking facilities going forward, those costs are paid for by the Parking Authority," said Thomas Hamilton, Norwalk's Finance Director.

Since its establishment five years ago, the Parking Authority has developed a more pleasing parking environment for the more than one million parkers that the city serves per year, while generating capital reserves that Mayor Richard Moccia envisions putting to good use.

The success of outsourced management and the forward thinking philosophy of the Parking Authority which, under the umbrella of the Public Works Department, oversees the city's 4,000 available on and off street parking spaces, has relieved taxpayers from prior financial burdens while improving customer services and facility maintenance.

While some people, both residents and business owners, were initially resistant to fee-based parking, city officials are confident those attitudes are beginning to change as the benefits and the improvements become more evident, not just in the parking facilities and services, but in the overall operation and image of the city.

"I understand that people that live here say, 'Hey, I pay taxes but I still have to pay to park.' We're trying to balance that by keeping our parking rates reasonable but also understanding that if we didn't have this system in place taxes might even be a little higher. We are a growing city but we try to balance the

needs of the taxpayers and the residents with the needs of the city. It's not always easy but I think we do a relatively good job of that," Moccia said.

"If you go to any other city in the state, Stamford, Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford, you're going to pay to park. Why should Norwalk be any different? Especially since city officials are using that revenue constructively. Our facilities are far better repaired and far better kept than they were before. We're fixing up what 25 or 30 years of neglect had brought the parking to in Norwalk. Prior to the creation of the Parking Authority parking structures had been neglected, ill-managed and there were outstanding parking tickets totaling more than \$1 million that were not being collected." said Stephen Bentkover, the Parking Authority's Chairman.

Parking facilities and services have a cost and someone must bear the cost-either taxpayers or those who use the facilities and services. The change in the way the Parking Authority manages the parking system has allowed city officials to redirect those tax dollars previously used to subsidize parking services to other important projects, eliminating the need to dip into capital funds, which can help to increase the city's bond ratings, keep taxes in check and ultimately prevent home values from decreasing exponentially. "It's a fair system. The people who pay for parking are the people who use the parking," said Hal Alvord, Director of Public Works.

"Operating the parking facilities systemically has given the Parking Authority the ability to standardize parking price rates, hours and policies, improve parking services and upgrade parking lots and garages. Parking facilities that were once in poor condition are now consistently well-lit, clean, well-cared for and safe. Once we were able to implement viable parking policies and pricing structures then the obvious benefit was that the parking system started generating the revenues that were necessary for it to be self sustaining," said Kathryn Hebert, Administrative Services Manager, who oversees the Parking System for the City of Norwalk.

"The success of the Parking Authority will allow us to undertake vital renovations without any assignment of the financial burden to the City of Norwalk taxpayer. Overall, its working, its better than it was and we hope to continue to improve it," Moccia said.

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