

Norfolk Insider

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“The Vehicle Parking District and New Downtown Parking Plan”

Representatives from the Vehicle Parking District (VPD) recently submitted a new downtown parking policy to the Norfolk City Council. Some residents who have read about the policy or watched the May 6 council meeting on the city's website might have wondered what the VPD is and what they do.



The VPD encompasses an area that covers most of downtown Norfolk from 1st Street to 8th Street along Norfolk Avenue, Madison Avenue and Braasch Avenue. It is a special taxing district that collects and uses taxes from downtown property owners to provide and maintain off street parking for employees, tenants and customers downtown. The funds can also be used for on street parking improvements and for the promotion and beautification of downtown Norfolk. By Nebraska state statute, the VPD tax rate cannot be set higher than 35 cents per \$100 of valuation.

Members of the board of directors are appointed by the Mayor with Norfolk City Council approval and serve as an advisory board to the Council. They normally meet several times a month.

Board members currently include Connie Geary (chair person), Brad Love, John Stappert, Pat Carney, James Wapelhorst, Chad Barnhill, Steve McNally, Roger Brummels, Tara Buell-Korth and Lacey Porn (alternate).

There are currently 144 businesses and public entities in the downtown area that include nearly 850 employees and tenants. There are 1300 private and public parking stalls in the downtown area that is off street parking. There are 418 parking stalls of on street parking in the downtown area.

When VPD Board member James Wapelhorst presented the new vehicle parking plan to the Council at the May meeting, he explained that because of the tremendous growth downtown in the last several years, available parking has become an issue.

The plan submitted to the council provides designated parking areas for employees and residents that Wapelhorst said would open up more parking spaces for customers who are patronizing businesses downtown. Customer parking would remain free. Under this plan employees and residents would purchase permits to park in area lots. Signs would clearly mark which parking spaces were reserved for employees and which ones were set aside for downtown residents. Rates for the parking spaces would be set at \$15 per quarter or \$55 per year per space.

A courtesy card would be given to the owners of vehicles the first time they park in someone's reserved spot or park in front of a business or in a designated customer parking space for more than two hours. Parking tickets would be issued for each subsequent occurrence. Wapelhorst said that the first ticket issued to violators would be a warning but subsequent fines would be \$25 per infraction. This policy would be in effect from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday for customer street parking and 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday for customer off street parking. There would be 24 hour enforcement for resident parking spaces. There would be no parking allowed in downtown on street parking spaces from 2:00 am to 7:00 a.m.

The City Council approved the plan at the May 20 council meeting. The new parking plan will be implemented once reserved parking spaces are designated and informational signs installed.