

Parking Solutions Task Force

Notes from Meeting of April 16 2018

Present: Eben Salvatore, Cherie Rasmussen, Mary Booher, Erin Early-Ward, Matt Hochman, Ron Greenberg, Martha Searchfield, Cornell Knight, Ron Beard

***Note: Next Meeting on May 14 at 5 pm***

### **Review of comments**

Task Force members have heard a range of comments following adoption of our report and recommendations by the Town Council in January. Some citizens do not see substantive changes in our recommendation and wonder why we are voting again. Those who object that parking meters don't reflect the small fishing village of our imagination continue to object. But some appreciate the shift in focus to reduce parking demand and congestion in the downtown area and see the non-tax revenue as benefiting residents over time.

### **Update on how the vote on the bond issue will occur**

Cornell Knight said that the bond for parking equipment (kiosks, meters and software) will be voted on by those residents voting on June 12 by secret ballot. Other measures up for a vote include purchase of the ferry terminal and various changes to the land use ordinance. There will be a public hearing on those items at the Council meeting of May 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Relationship of parking fund to draft business plan covering development of the ferry terminal property**

Mr. Knight indicated that a small group, appointed by the Town Council, is working with the engineering consultants to draft a business plan that would support purchase of the former ferry terminal property. That plan addresses satellite parking served by a shuttle system to reduce demand for parking in the downtown. The small group, of which Mr. Knight is a member, has tentatively identified \$100,000 from the parking fund as a revenue stream to support the business plan, but that revenue would not begin until year 3 of implementation of the proposed parking program, with revenues in the first two years directed to paying back the bond. Overall parking revenue is projected at \$500,000 per year, after expenses for enforcement, etc.

**Public Education**– making sure that voters know what is included in the overall report and recommendations of the Parking Solutions Task Force and Town Council, positive vote by Warrant Committee

- **Mary and Martha** brought sample “buttons” that task force members could wear in public settings, titled “Ask me about Parking Solutions”. These buttons and other one-on-one conversations will allow a low-key approach with high possible impact, with dialogue allowing exploration not only of the task force recommendations, but also how other citizens might solve the problem of too many automobiles seeking a limited number of parking spaces in the downtown area.
- **Martha** suggested that task force members with “Ask me about parking solutions” buttons attend two upcoming events:
  - On April 26<sup>th</sup> at Machias Savings Bank, the Chamber is co-sponsoring a business after hours to introduce its members to the police and fire services of the town.
  - On May 1<sup>st</sup>, the Chamber is hosting its annual open house at it’s welcome center in Trenton... this meeting has good attendance and would provide plenty of opportunity for one-on-one conversations.
- **Erin** volunteered to review and update the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) from our report, and when completed, will send to Cornell Knight for posting in a prominent place on the town website... with the link part of any written communication.
- **Mary** will contact the Rotary Club to see if they have an open date at which members of the Task Force might speak briefly and answer questions. Martha Searchfield and Eben, among others, volunteered as speakers.
- **Eben** will determine ways to engage staff and administration at MDI Hospital, including the Auxiliary, in order to calm fears about paid parking. We can remind them, as we did the head of buildings and grounds a year ago, that Bar Harbor residents, whether employees or volunteers will be eligible for free permits allowing parking on streets adjacent to the hospital campus, and that employee permits will be available at a reasonable cost for those hospital employees and volunteers who reside elsewhere.

### Letters to the Editor and Op-Ed pieces

- **Sherry** will contact Bill Dohmen, among others, to encourage submission of a letter to the editor or op-ed piece.
- **Mary** will consider a short letter to the editor urging voters to contact members of the task force for one-on-one conversations, not to convince anyone of their vote, but to make sure they have good information about the proposed seasonal parking program.
- **Erin** will consider a short letter linking the projected revenue from the seasonal parking program to long-term investment in making our streets and sidewalks more friendly to pedestrians and cyclists without using property taxes.
- **Ron G** is happy to help edit any draft letters or op ed pieces.

### Target dates for publication

Absentee voting starts soon, so letters could start as early as next week; likely last date of publication is the week before open town meeting

LETTERS AND OP EDS GO TO: [lgraves@mdislander.com](mailto:lgraves@mdislander.com)

SUBMISSION APRIL 27 FOR PUBLICATION MAY 3

SUBMISSION MAY 4 FOR PUBLICATION MAY 10

SUBMISSION MAY 11 FOR PUBLICATION MAY 17

SUBMISSION MAY 18 FOR PUBLICATION MAY 24

SUBMISSION MAY 25 FOR PUBLICATION ON MAY 31

**I have attached our report, which includes FAQ section on Page 8.**

Ronald E. Beard

***Parking Solutions Task Force Report and  
Recommendations for a Seasonal Parking Program for  
Bar Harbor  
December 27, 2017***

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Members of Parking Solutions Task Force, appointed by the Town Council, are Mary Booher, Dick Cough, Erin Early-Ward, Matt Hochman, Liz Kase, Sherry Rasmussen, Eben Salvatore, Martha Searchfield, Ron Greenberg, Jane Holland and Heather Sorokin.

*The work of the task force is facilitated by Ron Beard, with staff support from Cornell Knight*

## ***Introduction***

*This is an updated report, based on the work of the Task Force since a vote on a bond to purchase parking kiosks and meters failed by four votes on the floor of June 2017 town meeting. In light of the close vote, the Town Council directed the Task Force to continue its work and bring back a revised proposal for consideration. Based on public comments at the Town Meeting and since, the Task Force has determined that the most effective strategy for solving parking congestion is to reduce demand for parking in the commercial district through measures detailed below. The Task Force also determined that such improvements not increase the burden on property tax payers. Should a positive vote for bonding purchase of parking equipment pass in June 2018, there would be an additional year to work on guidance for implementation to begin the parking program in the Spring of 2019.*

## ***Overall rationale for a parking program***

A good deal of the congestion problem throughout summer in downtown Bar Harbor stems from too many people looking for our available parking spaces. Residents, employees and visitors all compete for spaces, and naturally want to park as close to their destination as possible. Residents and employees know how to “game” the system: most downtown parking is limited to two hours... we move our cars to avoid being ticketed, or we gamble that if we are ticketed, it’s worth the hassle and cost. Meanwhile, when they are unable to find parking near the center of town, visitors drive further and further into residential areas.

The Parking Solutions Task Force, established by the town council, has been exploring options for what is intended to be a more rational system, drawing on best practices from other towns with similar circumstances. We haven’t been asked to create plans for new parking downtown, but to make best use of current public parking and to reduce demand through increased shuttle bus service, satellite parking lots and making it safer for people to walk or bicycle into town.

We believe the key elements of a seasonal parking program (May to October, 9 am to 8 pm) all work together to shift the current patterns so that there are more spaces available in the commercial center for visitors, while residents and employees know that, with permits on their cars, they are able park along adjacent side streets all day without fear of ticketing.

Employing the right mix of kiosks and smart meters for the spaces most in demand (within the main commercial district and in town-owned parking lots) will encourage turnover, increase the effectiveness of our enforcement efforts, and after paying for costs of equipment and staffing, create a reserve fund on which the town can draw for

improvements to streetscapes, increased bus service (proven to reduce demand for parking) and amenities that encourage pedestrians and cyclists to leave their cars at home, purchase of workable satellite parking—all without increasing property taxes.

### ***Five Key Task Force Recommendations***

1. **Install kiosks to facilitate paid parking in approximately 380 spaces in the following public lots:** Town Pier (100 minus fisherman), Harborview Park (6), Newport Drive (43), Casino Lot (17), Kid's Corner (30 +-), RV Parking on lower Main Street (?), Grant Park (44), Back Yard (41) and Central Parking Lots (115).
2. **Install smart meters for approx. 400 on-street parking spaces located on:**
  - Cottage Street, both sides (143 spaces),
  - West Street to Holland Ave, both sides; employee permit parking on south side of West Street from Holland to Eden Street (approx. 80 metered spaces)
  - Main Street to Park Street, both sides, including RV Parking along the ball field, (137 spaces)
  - Mt. Desert Street, both sides, and on the right side of the street leaving town, from Kennebec Place to High Street, totaling 35 spaces
  - Firefly Lane (5 spaces)
3. **Seasonal permit parking from 9AM-8PM for Residents and Employees** on all other streets in the Downtown that are not recommended for meters. An inventory of these streets should be included in the amendments to Chapter 194 of the Town Code as the Seasonal Parking Solutions program is implemented.
4. **Special Provisions for Bar Harbor Residents, including**
  - **Provide Free, 15-minute parking spots** at Post Office, Town Office, the Library and at other key municipal locations, based on public input prior to implementation.
  - **Resident “Smart Pass”** –providing pre-paid, ½ price parking at meters and kiosks
  - **Designated “residents only” spaces-** Some on-street spaces and some spaces in the paid public lots should be reserved for residents who wish to park in Town for a short period of time for free Number and location of these spaces, based on public input, reviewed and adjusted annually.
5. **Establishment of a Parking fund-** The proposed seasonal parking program includes a provision for new revenues generated by parking fees from smart meters and kiosks, and from sale of reasonable-cost employee parking permits. The town currently receives revenues from payment of parking fines. The task force recommends that these combined revenues be placed

in a town-managed reserve fund, and at the direction of the town council, annual transfers from this “parking fund” would be made, first,

- to reimburse all costs associated with the operation of the seasonal parking program, including monitoring and enforcement, signage, software, payments on principle and interest on bond to purchase equipment, removal, storage and resetting of smart meters and kiosks in fall and spring, and other associated costs; and, thereafter,
- to make improvements that reduce congestion in the busy summer season, and make being in downtown Bar Harbor a more pleasant experience for residents and visitors, including investment in satellite parking at the Ferry Terminal lot and associated shuttle service, improvements to “street-scapes” (such as the proposed Cottage Street and lower Main Street plans), and other amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists, and,
- to supplement the use of property taxes paid by residents and businesses in the town of Bar Harbor for improvements to the physical and visual qualities of the Downtown Area

## **Other Recommendations for implementing the proposed Parking Program:**

### **a. Enforcement, Fines and Collection**

The Seasonal Parking Program would be regulated by the Police Department. With adequate staffing, funded by the parking program, the proposal should work effectively, freeing up on-street metered parking in the downtown commercial districts and public parking lots for visitors and customers, while providing access to permit parking on adjacent streets and in the residential areas.

DESMAN Associates advises that fines be three times greater than the associated parking fee. If 8 hours of paid parking in premium areas is \$16, fines would be approximately \$50. There will be a substantial learning curve once this program is implemented. We recommend a fine structure of \$20 for the first violation, \$35 for the second and \$50 after that. Any unpaid fines older than 30 days would increase to \$75, the minimum amount that a collection agency would accept. The process of issuing tickets and collecting the fines will involve several departments of the Town. We recommend this fine structure be further discussed and finalized between the Town Council and appropriate town departments. There should also be input from the public.

### **b. Times of Enforcement for metered and kiosk parking**

The task force recommends the hours of enforcement for metered and kiosk parking be from 9 am until 8 pm, mid-May to mid-October.

**c. Employee and Resident Parking Stickers**

Parking stickers for residents and employees would be administered by town office staff (not the police department). Stickers would be permanently affixed to vehicles, numbered, and cross-referenced to the license plate number of the vehicle, name and address.

**Free residential parking stickers**

We recommend that all residents of Bar Harbor be issued one (per registered vehicle) free residential parking sticker at a time, and in a manner, that is convenient for Town staff and the residents. We expect the Council will need public and staff input to determine the most user-friendly method.

**Employee parking stickers**

We recommend that any employees wishing to park on the designated streets need to be issued an employee parking permit. The fee for this seasonal permit should be \$30, which could be paid by the employer or directly by the employee. Employment verification, such as a pay stub or written request by the employer should be required. We think the data collected from this part of the program should be reviewed in detail at the end of each season.

**d. Contractor and service vehicles**

As per current ordinance, contractors would be able to park in areas otherwise requiring a permit. We recommend section 194-28-B remain in the Town Code to accommodate service and delivery vehicles. *“Service and delivery vehicles excepted. Non-permitted vehicles stopped, standing or parked within 200 feet of a building for the purpose of making deliveries or providing services to a building located on a street or portion of a street described or specified in this section shall not be required to display the permit otherwise required herein”.*

**e. Time-limits for meters and kiosks**

In order to promote turn-over in the core commercial area of Bar Harbor, the task force recommends that metered parking within the following area be limited to two-hour parking: Cottage Street, West Street to Bridge Street, Main Street to Atlantic Avenue, and Mt. Desert Street to High Street.

Parking at meters outside of that defined area and in public parking lots (kiosk) would have no time limit, while continuing the current stipulation that cars must be moved after 72 hours in public parking lots. We recommend this be reviewed annually and adjusted as needed.

**f. Special daily parking permits for guests of residents**

The task force recommends on-line issuance of one-day special parking permits, available in person at the town office or printable online, for guests of residents with no alternative to on-street parking on all unmetered streets. We recommend that a running list of permits issued be reviewed by a parking enforcement officer in order to prevent abuse of this program.

**g. Details regarding a form of special parking permit for grandfathered B&Bs and home businesses, including registered “weekly rentals”.**

The task force recommends that the very few owners of B&Bs who were “grandfathered” (do not provide parking equivalent to the requirements of current ordinances) as well as owners of home businesses, including registered “weekly rentals,” may be issued special parking permits (hang-tags) based on application to the town Parking and Traffic Committee, and presentation of evidence of need (e.g. owner has no off-street parking, or inadequate off street parking to accommodate guests).

The task force recommends the fee for these permits be \$750 per season, with replacements for lost hang-tags available for \$100 per issuance. Each hang-tag would have a number and be referenced to the physical address of the applicant. Once approved the “special need” permits could be renewed annually

## *Further steps for consideration*

### *Education-*

A comprehensive education program, with public sessions backed up by good information on the town website will start the education process. The Chamber of Commerce, the Hub of Bar Harbor, the Rotary Club, and the business community could assist. We recommend an educational exhibit be developed that could be distributed by lodging establishments, campgrounds, Chamber, etc. that would inform visitors about this program. This could be in the form of a PDF or an app could be developed.

### *Signage-*

Appropriate signage will help orient visitors, employees and residents to the new parking program.

### *The Parking Solutions Task Force should remain in place to recommend adjustments as we go-*

In consultation with relevant town personnel, the PSTF should review Program experience annually and recommend adjustments, especially within the first five years. Review would include the budget, operations, meter use and public feedback.

### *Satellite parking-*

The concept of satellite parking has been a consistent proposal. “Free” satellite lots versus paid parking would be an incentive to employees, especially when there is access to the Island Explorer. Currently, 20% of Island Explorer riders are estimated to be “local,” with an estimated half that number being employees. There are currently **limited, publicly-owned possibilities for “satellite lots”** to be designated for employees. Some possibilities, with varying degrees of capital investment, include:

- The **“Ferry Terminal”**, consistent with recent acceptance of recommendations for the purchase and use of a portion of the ferry terminal property, the parking fund could provide the means to support improvements and new, dedicated shuttle service from this location.
- The **Acadia Gateway Center in Trenton**, if completed, would provide an additional 350 free “park and ride” spaces for visitors or employees. There are currently some 100 spaces available at the site of the **Island Explorer bus maintenance facility** on the Trenton site. Island Explorer Express bus commuter runs serving satellite lots would enhance their appeal by shortening commute time. Additional funds and drivers would be necessary.
- **Connors- Emerson-** We plan to implement an experimental employee permit system for the use of school parking lots in the summer of 2018.
- **MDI High School-** School officials are willing to explore further use of high school lots, linked by Island Explorer service in months when school is not in session



### ***Increasing the frequency of existing Island Explorer bus service along Route 3-***

Increased bus service for hotels and campgrounds could slow the demand for in-town parking. If there are currently about 250 cars parked at hotels or campgrounds, and doubling the frequency of service results in a 30% increase in ridership, such an increase in service might forestall the need for 75 parking spaces in town.

The current budget of \$2 million for the Island Explorer comes primarily from federal sources through Acadia National Park, but also from the Town of Bar Harbor and from hotels with “front door” service. Downeast Transportation will increase the number of busses in service from 28 to 33 in the next several years. Increased revenue could mean increased frequency along Route 3.

Money isn’t the only barrier to expanded service. Current demand for qualified bus drivers exceeds the supply. Island Explorer service was curtailed earlier than planned in the fall of 2016 due to the lack of drivers.

The Town and local businesses could explore other opportunities for “satellite parking” and cost of acquisition and improvement, leaving open the question of whether those expenditures come from property taxes, partnership with business or the parking fund.

### ***Concurrent development of streetscapes-***

This will allow the town to assure that parking spaces, along with meters and kiosks, are laid out to provide maximum efficiency, convenience, safety and aesthetics. Current efforts to look at improving Cottage Street, and the work of the Task Force on Aging, should result in priorities for the town’s capital improvement program. In select instances, a case might be made for eliminating certain on-street parking spaces to enhance other public benefits (handicapped access, aesthetics, etc.) The town should work with the Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce, the Hub of Bar Harbor and other groups to encourage alternatives to the use of private automobiles including walking and biking, supported by installation of bike-racks and shelters, benches, landscape plantings, lighting and other amenities.

### ***Cooperation with Downtown Business Owners***

Beyond establishment of an employee permit system in the commercial district, **development of additional parking for employees** could be undertaken in partnership with local businesses who most stand to benefit from providing such parking. One way for businesses to support the program is for them to purchase permits for those employees who are not residents of Bar Harbor (those who are entitled to free resident permits). Further efforts could be explored when we have better data about the number of employees who require parking spaces.

## **Appendix A. 25 Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. Can we create new parking spaces to solve the problem?**

In August 2017, The Town Council asked the Parking Solutions Task Force to revise their Spring 2017 plan to solve the long-standing parking problem. The task force has been working to make EXISTING parking more efficient. Consistent with the Council Goals for a sustainable future, our overall approach is to encourage visitors and residents alike to WALK, BIKE AND BUS, with the aim of reducing demand on finite downtown parking instead of creating new parking spaces.

**2. Will we have an opportunity to vote on the revised plan?**

Yes. When voters considered a bond for purchase of kiosks and meters in June, many people left town meeting before the final vote tally, when the vote was \_\_\_\_ in favor and \_\_\_\_ opposed. The Town Council asked us to keep working so we have come back to the community with a revised plan to help solve the long-standing parking problem. Assuming that the Council seeks to pay “up front” costs to purchase kiosks, meters and software through a bond, which will be up for a vote at June 2018 town meeting.

**3. Can we create a better balance of residential and employee parking in our neighborhoods?**

Employees are already parking in many neighborhoods. In addition, they park in the commercial districts and move their cars every two hours to avoid a ticket, or they take a chance on a ticket. Our permitting program will give Bar Harbor residents a free parking sticker for residential areas. Those employees who are not residents will receive a parking sticker at a nominal fee, allowing parking in designated areas including some residential streets. Instead of parking on residential streets as they do now, tourists will be directed to paid parking on streets and public parking lots.

**4. What options will residents have for parking?**

If you are a resident, you will receive a permit allowing you to park on any of the residential streets. We will create a number of “fifteen-minute free” spaces (post office, town office, library, etc). And you can purchase a discounted “smart pass”, allowing you to use all of the public spaces and lots... it will work like a debit card, which you can “top up” as needed. With further public input, we may be able to create additional “resident only” spaces.

**5. What if residents just want to run some short errands downtown?**

First, residents and others will be able to park in all areas before 9 AM. There is free customer parking all day for customers of our local banks, pharmacies, health services and grocery stores. We will designate free 15 minute spaces for the post office, town hall and library.

**6. Can the spaces at Connors-Emerson school be used to augment employee parking?**

Parking Solutions Task Force met with representatives of the elementary school and high school. We are working together to make some employee parking available during the latter part of June, July and until mid-August, when the school is not in session.

**7. Can the ferry terminal lot be used for satellite parking?**

The Ferry Terminal Advisory Committee has recommended to Town Council that we include satellite parking with a shuttle into downtown at the ferry terminal. The Parking Solution Task Force endorses this recommendation and urges the Council to use revenues from paid parking to contribute to payment for improvements and related shuttle services.

**8. How much parking do we need to accommodate residents, employees and visitors?**

The Desman parking studies over two summers (2014-15) concluded that that most tourists, residents and employees are accommodated most of the time with our existing number of parking spots. At peak times, however, as many as 100 cars circulate through the commercial district and into residential areas looking for parking. This plan attempts to change behavior... with residents and employees guaranteed parking spaces through the permit program, and with tourists using paid parking on streets and in public parking lots in the commercial district.

The need for employee parking vary greatly from year to year and even from shift to shift. Some employees live in the downtown and walk to work, some live off island and drive to work and every scenario in between. When surveying the needs, we found that employers/employees were grateful for our attempts to find employee parking so that employees don't have to move cars every two hours. Solving the employee parking may need adjustment from year to year.

**9. Besides additional revenues to the Parking Fund, what are the other benefits to the town?**

The seasonal parking plan will generate at least \$500,000 per year. The first priority will be to pay off the cost of parking equipment, enforcement and related costs. After which, we recommend revenues be designated to assist with development of satellite parking at ferry terminal and associated shuttle service and improvements to our streets, sidewalks, making Bar Harbor more walkable, "bike-able" and pleasant for all. The additional revenues will have the effect of offsetting expenses born by tax payers.

**10. Why can't we try the parking lots first and then do on street parking?**

If we charge for parking in public lots only, folks will flock to the free on-street parking thus increasing traffic congestion. Permit parking will free up parking along residential streets now taken by visitors. Parking consultants, local and from away, have advised us to do paid parking on-street and in lots simultaneously with a permit program for residents and employees.

**11. Will paid parking be 24 hours a day?**

NO. Everyone will have 13 HOURS A DAY OF FREE parking. Paid parking will be 9 am to 8 pm. Delivery of inventory, removal of trash and recyclables, etc. can be done before parking charges start at 9 am. Also, we will have continued free parking for seven months, from mid-October to mid-May.

**12. Will COA students be able to get a residential parking sticker?**

Students can present a valid college ID and a car registration from any state to the Town of Bar Harbor for a free residential parking sticker.

**13. How will parking enforcement be enhanced and improved within the Parking Program?**

Smart parking meters/kiosks will make enforcement and revenue collection more efficient. The Police Chief has met with the committee and the Police Department will develop strategies that make enforcement more effective. The cost of parking enforcement can be reimbursed from the funds taken in through kiosks and meters.

**14. Have other communities with a similar set of parking problems implemented programs similar to what we are proposing?**

While every community is different, we found several communities that use a combination of paid parking via Smart Meters and Kiosks, along with permit parking for residents and employees. Among them are Newburyport, MA. and Hot Springs, Arkansas.

**15. When will parking regulations be enforced?**

Mid May –Mid October 7 days/week, 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM. The rest of the year the parking meters will be removed from the streets.

**16. What are the time limits for meters and lots?**

Most spaces downtown will be limited to two hours. Other spaces and lots will allow all-day parking

**17. What are the overnight restrictions at meters and in paid lots?**

Same as the current ordinance: Vehicles may not be left anywhere for more than 72 hours.

**18. Why not use kiosks for on-street parking instead of meters?**

Meters have less visual impact and less impact on pedestrian flow. Kiosks are only effective when visible (“findable”) from a large number of condensed spaces (parking lots or street parking without cross-street interruptions).

**19. Is a parking garage part of this plan?**

The concept of a parking garage is not part of this plan. Recent zoning changes do not allow parking garages in the downtown area.

**20. Who gets a “resident” sticker and where can it be used?**

Any resident of BH gets a free sticker for each vehicle registered in BH, including residents from outlying BH villages. “Resident” stickers can be used in the many streets designated as “resident and employee only” and in any “Resident Only” spaces designated within the metered spaces and the public lots.

**21. Who gets an “employee” sticker and where can it be used?**

Any employee may show proof of employment and receive a permit for \$30 for the entire season. Any employer may also purchase permits for their employees. Employees may park on any of the streets designated “resident and employee only”

**22. What if I have friends coming to visit from another town during enforcement times?**

BH residents can get a free, visitor parking pass. Remember your “resident” sticker will allow you to park on street, and your visitors can park in your driveway.

**23. Will the sticker program increase parking in residential areas?**

By eliminating visitor parking in residential areas, no overall increase in parking in residential areas is anticipated.

**24. How much will a parking violation cost?**

The recommendation in the Task Force report suggests \$20 for the first offense, \$35 for the second and \$50 for each subsequent violation.

**25. Will parking fees discourage tourists?**

Most tourists are accustomed to paying for parking and will appreciate the improved experience.

## **Appendix B. Background on the work of the Parking Solutions Task Force**

Concerns about seasonal parking in the commercial downtown of Bar Harbor have been the subject of several advisory processes, including recommendations in 2002 by the town's parking committee, the recommendations of a 2004 Transportation Task Force, and a 2012 Economic Development Task Force report.

In 2016 the Bar Harbor Town Council appointed a Parking Solutions Task Force to implement recommendations outlined in a report by consultants Bermello Ajamil and Partners (see Appendix C). PSTF appointees included members of the former Back Yard Parking Advisory Committee plus new appointees. The PSTF began meeting in August of 2016 and has met twice a month through the autumn and winter. It eliminated consideration of a parking garage and its recommendations do not call for further exploration of this option at this time.

Members of the Task Force observe that current parking regulations are loosely enforced at best. Many locals and employees have figured out ways around the time limits and will routinely occupy the most convenient spaces in Town for hours at a time. This forces others to circle Town repeatedly while waiting for a space to open, park in the residential areas, or worst of all leave Town frustrated, vowing never to return.

Parking on public streets and in town-owned parking lots is a key asset to the quality of life and convenience of residents and visitors and commercial enterprise, assuring that customers find it convenient to shop or to visit firms providing services, and that employees are accommodated during working hours in appropriate locations.

At one time, the zoning ordinances of the Town of Bar Harbor required that each application for new commercial construction or change of a property to a commercial use would require provision of off-street parking appropriate to the activity. As commercial business grew, commercially provided off-street parking would also grow. In reality, the only growth that provided parking was large hotel development. Most small businesses in Town did not have any option as there was no available land. These businesses were prevented from renovating, expanding, or otherwise improving their properties because of the parking requirements.

Arguing that existing ordinances were stifling economic growth. Business interests requested and the Planning Board proposed eliminating the requirement for off-street parking for all businesses except lodging establishments. That change was approved by the voters as part of zoning ordinance amendments in 2010.

Over the intervening years, the number of visitors to the town of Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park has grown. Some of those additional visitors come by cruise ships and do not need parking. Some visitors pay for parking in privately owned lots. Other visitors stay in hotels or campgrounds, where off-street parking is provided.

In 1999, spurred by island-wide and Acadia National Park interest and funded from the sale of park visitor passes and town, state, federal and private sources, the *Island Explorer* bus system

was initiated to serve visitors and employees. Operated by Downeast Transportation, this “free to the rider” bus service connects from lodging and campgrounds to the commercial center of Bar Harbor and destinations in the national park. It is estimated that use of the *Island Explorer* reduces parking demand in Bar Harbor by 250 spaces, as visitors leave their vehicles parked at hotels and campgrounds.

Free, on-street parking in the downtown sections of town routinely fills up during the tourist season. Based on projections of the parking studies in 2013 and 2014, as many as 100 cars were circling the town unable to find parking, and venturing further into residential sections of town to park. Employees are also taking full advantage of free, on-street parking, moving their cars every two hours to avoid tickets or using streets where there is no time limit. Both visitors and employees routinely exceed allowed times, as a \$20 fine is seen as an acceptable cost for parking. Many fines are routinely not paid.

The proposed Seasonal Parking Solutions program (mid-May to mid-October) will be a change for Bar Harbor. However, most towns and cities with traffic and parking congestion problems include paid parking as a way to relieve local property tax payers of some of the burden of providing services to growing numbers of visitors. We reviewed the policies of several other towns that have similar programs to the one we are recommending.

A paid parking system, along with a corresponding permit system for employees and residents, is an attempt to properly allocate a scarce public resource among many users. Paid parking on street or in public parking lots would generally go to shorter term users, while employees and residents would use free or lower cost permits in areas outside the commercial district for longer periods of time. Both employers and employees have welcomed this suggestion.

This Committee recommends the implementation of the Seasonal Parking Program outlined below, followed by several years of observation, data collection, and any necessary adjustments, before further steps are considered. It is anticipated that there will be a period of re-education with regards to current habits, operations, and policy adjustments after implementation. Once the parking behavioral patterns are established additional parking solutions could be considered. Should the town decide to take that step in the future, the proposed parking program would provide the financial resources for doing so without cost to the property tax payers.

For the record, the Task Force does not recommend that the Town of Bar Harbor consider a parking garage. In fact, voters at Town Meeting in June 2017, rejected a zoning amendment to allow parking garages in the commercial center of town.

## **Appendix C. Background to the 2016 Consultant's Report**

In 2012, the Bar Harbor Town Council created the Back-Yard Parking Advisory Committee to look at congestion and parking problems in Bar Harbor, and to explore the possibility of a public-private partnership to construct a parking garage in the vicinity of the town-owned Back Yard Parking Lot, behind the Criterion Theater, between Main Street and Rodick Street.

The committee held a public meeting in May, 2012 that led to the development of ten criteria that should be met if such a project were to be successful. Committee members did not have the expertise to quantify parking needs, or to determine the size and financial feasibility of a parking garage. There was feedback from the public that the entire parking issue should be part of a study beyond just a garage concept.

The committee drafted a “request for proposals” that was issued by the Town and led, in June 2013, to a contract with Bermello Ajamil and Partners, including DESMAN Associates, for a four-phase study to look at the proposed site for a parking garage, determine current and projected parking demand, determine the financial feasibility of constructing and operating a parking garage, and what other solutions could help improve the parking situation in Bar Harbor

Bermello Ajamil and Partners submitted a report in November of 2014 covering the first three phases of work. Financial modeling began in early 2015, and the consultants presented preliminary findings in a public “open house” in November of that year. After incorporating public comments, Bermello Ajamil and Partners submitted their final report to the town early in 2016.

### Consultant's Report

<http://www.barharbormaine.gov/402/Parking-Garage-Presentations>

Consultant's FAQ's, and final recommendations:

<http://www.barharbormaine.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1767>