

PRESENTATION SPEECH TEXT AND OTHER NOTES ON ORDINANCE 16-22

We have no Parking Department. In fact, as many as eight city departments have some say in the management of parking since the meters went in and departments were reorganized to make transportation policy more coherent (Whereas #2). There is no one person tasked with parking, no parking “czar.” And no one department has authority over the others to oversee the wide range of policies that parking touches on. **Parking has no obvious point person.**

Parking in District 6 is a bigger deal than noise; it’s bigger than trash. It’s bigger even than the most recent intractable social issue of vagrancy downtown. All of seven and parts of two more of the eleven parking zones are in District 6. You know that I’m working on a new parking zone for Garden Hill, which wants enforcement on evenings and weekends. All 14 municipal parking lots and all three city-owned garages are in District 6. Since 2013, the entire parking meter zone is in District 6. **The existential issue of District 6, for as long as I have served, is parking.**

Frankly, I have every right to claim to be that person, or at least the city’s go-to authority on parking. Instead, I am proposing Ordinance 16-22, to devote a nine-member commission to parking, and all the impacts it has across the city.

The primary goal of that commission would be to develop a comprehensive policy towards the use and management of parking. Because we’ve never had such a policy, we’ve made **ad hoc decisions on parking that have sometimes conflicted** with each other (Whereas #3).

Parking is a significant use of land locally. We’ve had a comprehensive land-use plan, **the Growth Policies Plan**, to guide our policymaking for 25 years. Parking significantly impacts **five of the seven pillars of the GPP**, which we still use. Most of the impacts of parking create negative externalities (Whereas #4):

- *Compact urban form:* Parking lots are antithetical to “compact” form.
- *Nurture environmental integrity:* Parking lots and facilities take up space where trees and buildings used to be or could be, and increase stormwater runoff.
- *Leverage public capital:* Parking lots take up space that could be used for almost anything else; parking garages are very expensive. Every dollar the city spends on car parking is a dollar not spent on sidewalks, trails, public transit, or bike parking.
- *Mitigate traffic:* perhaps the most important principle, specifically calls for “expanding public transit, bike and ped facilities,” as well as implementing strategies to manage traffic.” It specifically does not call for “more free parking,” or “more convenient parking.”
- *Conserve community character:* The GPP calls, under this heading, for “protecting and enhancing neighborhoods, improving downtown vitality, and maintaining Bloomington’s historic character.” Unchecked parking construction destroyed a great deal of this community’s character in the 50s, 60s and 70s.

Many people have asked why parking issues can’t be taken up by, say, the Traffic Commission. The simplest reason is: it would easily double their workload. But a more important reason is that **Traffic’s reason for existence is to consider the movement of vehicles.** The *storage* of vehicles is a very different matter, and at least as important (Whereas #5). Vehicle storage generates revenue, something Traffic was not designed to consider. There’s dispute about which types of users should be using which type of parking, an economic and sustainable development issue that Traffic was not engineered to tackle, nor is Traffic designed to consider the bureaucratic problems of managing permits, tickets, or appeals.

The easiest way to think of this proposal is that if the question involves a vehicle in motion, it's the domain of the Traffic Commission. If the vehicle is at rest, it's the domain of the Parking Commission.

The new Commission's purpose is modeled on, but significantly different from, the Traffic Commission, which was created in the 70s and predates the GPP. Its purpose in city code is to "improve traffic conditions," not to "mitigate traffic" like the GPP calls for.

Thus, the main point of the Parking Commission is not simply to "improve parking conditions," but, rather, **to achieve the city's comprehensive plan objectives through parking policy.** To that end, one of its primary goals will be to develop that comprehensive policy on parking, that would function as an attachment to the GPP, just like Master Thoroughfare Plan.

The ordinance creates a new §2.12.110 in Bloomington Municipal Code, which describes the composition and duties of the new Parking Commission. Because parking is an economic development issue, the Commission would have three representatives from organizations: **two merchants** with addresses in the meter zone, and a **representative from a not-for-profit** organization that owns or leases space in the meter zone. Because parking generates a great deal of revenue, there would be **four citizens**, at least one of whom would have to be a resident of the meter zone, and another one of the four a resident of either the meter zone **or** a neighborhood parking zone. And because parking generates bureaucratic concerns, there would also be **a Councilmember** and a **staffer from Planning & Transportation**. All nine commissioners, five Mayoral and four Council appointees all together, would jointly be concerned with overall policy: Council would appoint a councilmember, a merchant and two citizens.

The new Commission would have access to all parking data, after it was anonymized. It would regularly review the performance of all parking facilities, and any statistics about services and enforcement provided by various departments. It would produce an annual report. And it would make regular recommendations on pricing, hours, locations of spaces, neighborhood parking zones, bureaucratic concerns, and similar parking-related matters.

Without this new commission, we as a city will continue to make parking decisions arbitrarily, in fits and starts, and without coherent rationale. This is why we plan, and why we make subplans. There ought to be a written policy for how parking is used, and there are many other ongoing considerations regarding the management of parking. I ask your support for a Parking Commission to tackle these objectives.

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QUESTIONS

Haven't we considered this already? Why this again? How is it different?

It's slightly larger than the 2015 proposal, using the Traffic Commission as a template. And the original was proposed as part of larger legislation that offered bulk discount programs to merchants to make the meters easier to swallow, programs that were never implemented. This proposal is not part of a larger legislative scheme: it is a standalone proposal that has matured, and takes a more general approach to parking policy.

Will this be a superior court for appealing parking ticket appeals? No. Item (4), by the way, refers to “complaints” and does not use the word “appeals” or give the Commission authority to overturn appeals. But it would examine patterns and problems that come up because of parking ticket appeals in order to address systemic parking problems.

Won't the new comprehensive plan be different than the GPP? We've been waiting for the new plan for 14 years. The law still in effect directs us to the GPP. The new plan will not be that different; we are not overturning our plans wholesale. Some of the pillars may be reworded, but the principles will be similar. This simply says: let's add a subplan to address parking.

How will it be staffed? It will be staffed by a Planning and Transportation staffer who is not also the mayor's appointee to the Commission. I began discussing the possibility with Christy Langley six months ago about what kind of resources the staffing might require. After extensive conversation with her and Deputy Mayor Mick Renneisen, they came to the conclusion that no additional person-hours were necessary to be added. Nate Nickel would be tasked with supporting the Commission.

Why aren't other departments ex-officio members? Because they didn't feel the need to be. They were all polled by me or Mr. Renneisen. If it is the will of the administration or council to constitute it differently, like Lafayette's PC is perhaps, I'm open to it. But Lafayette's is also almost entirely made up of department heads and is completely appointed by their mayor.

Do other cities have a parking commission? Lafayette does (see above).

What are these other duties of the new Commission? They'd set their own rules, as long as they meet monthly, just like other commissions do. And, like the Sustainability Cmsn, they could recommend appropriations or solicit grants or gifts to achieve the goals set forth here.

Why does the administration not support a PC? They believe that all boards and commissions should be reviewed for relevance. I have told them that I believe a review of boards and commissions is as in order as a salary ordinance, and I would commit to sitting on a review panel over the next year. But I think it will take that long to do such a review, and I believe that very few commissions would need to be overhauled. Of course I simply disagree with the idea that Traffic and Parking should merge. The meters will be paid off in the first half of 2017; there is an immediate need for comprehensive parking policy, as well as short term parking management policies.

OTHER TALKING POINTS

Most of us don't drive around all day long, although some days it may feel like it. The average vehicle only moves 5% of the time. We devote an extraordinary amount of land to vehicles the rest of the time, for their storage. **Parking is as much an issue of land use, economic development, sustainability and neighborhood development as it is of transportation.**

“Traffic” just means movement. TC was never meant to consider issues like:

- **Revenue.** Parking generates significant revenue for the city — millions of dollars. That revenue could be appropriated for non-transportation-related purposes by a vote of Council. As mentioned, the administration and council have changed rates arbitrarily; they could attempt further to raise revenue to accomplish unrelated goals, or to lower rates at the expense of walkers, bikers and bus riders. A Commission whose focus solely is parking will

not have the same incentive as elected officials to, say, change parking rates for short-term political gain, or for any reason other than good governance. That's why its mission is not simply "to improve parking conditions" like the Traffic Commission's goal is to "improve traffic conditions," but to improve "transportation" conditions through parking.

— **Economic/sustainable development.** TC was not built to consider, for example, how to get employees or downtown residents from not parking on streets that should have been available for restaurant patrons around the Square. It was not built to consider how to *reduce* traffic, to think about putting destinations closer together to reduce the need for travel in the first place, to reduce pollutants. Their goal is just to keep vehicles moving.

— **Bureaucracy.** TC was not built to think about issues regarding the issuance of permits and tickets, the appeal of tickets, or similar administrative matters. Say someone appeals to the Clerk's office and is rejected, even if the policy that requires the clerk to reject the appeal is a bad policy. There is currently no one tasked with reviewing that policy in need of a fix. Or the 4th St. garage always being "full" even when there are lots of spaces available: it's an issue for TC only because the disconnect might cause cruising traffic around the garage.

Examples of arbitrary decisions regarding parking

— The administration in 2013 announced that one of its reasons for installing parking meters was to gain revenue; the next year, they recommended a reduction of meter hours was to forego revenue.

— Most parking in Bloomington neighborhoods is free or underpriced. Parking in most Bloomington neighborhoods is free. In others, it costs a little more than \$2/mo, regardless of need or demand.

— The Fourth St. Garage is often "full" because anyone may park free for three hours at a time, and underpriced permits often require spaces to go unused. Meanwhile, hundreds of spaces in the other two city garages are going totally unused.

— Some metered parking is overpriced; some is underpriced. Metered on-street spaces are regulated at \$1/hr; some get very little use, while others are in constant demand.

— Derek Richey can show you all the magnificent buildings that were torn down before 1975 in the name of parking lots and "progress."

I've never heard anyone justify parking lots or garages as being part of the city's historic character...I hope I never will. I'm always fielding complaints from neighbors who see other yards turning into parking lots. No one celebrates an IU basketball victory in the parking lot at College Mall. No one ever celebrated the lighting of the parking lot at Whitehall Crossing. We celebrate in places like the Courthouse Square, which are successful precisely because there we very strictly regulate parking, and we didn't tear down our Courthouse in the name of parking, like so many Hoosier cities we can name.

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