

Special Council Meeting  
October 17, 2016  
Chancellor Center

President of Council Robert Walker called a special meeting of Newtown Borough Council to order at 5:30 P.M. on Monday, October 17, 2016. President Walker asked those in attendance to join him in a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Councillors Grunde-McLaughlin, Gusty, King, McDermott, Walker and Warren; Solicitor Bolla; Mayor Swartz

### **President's Introduction – Robert J. Walker**

President Robert Walker apologized for the lack of audio equipment due to the unavailability of trained IT personnel at the Chancellor Center. He stated that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the possible implementation of paid parking in the Newtown Borough municipal lot, with an eye towards the revenue stream and taking into account both businesses and residents. He outlined the evening's agenda.

He noted that our current Ordinance does not allow for paid parking and would therefore need to be revised if parking kiosks are approved. Mr. Walker reported that, from 2005 to 2016, the Borough has spent \$1,150,811 on roads, infrastructure, maintenance, and repairs, which includes the expenditure of \$230,000 to replace the main municipal parking lot last Spring. The two sources of revenue in Newtown Borough for street construction include real estate taxes totaling \$91,000/year, and \$65,000/year from liquid fuels, which represents a portion of the taxes we pay at gas stations. The Borough is limited to spending liquid fuels funds on roads only.

In 2012, the street improvement fund was at .625 mil, generating \$25,000/year in real estate tax revenue to the Borough. In 2013, Borough Council raised that millage rate to 1.125 mils for a gross revenue of \$46,000/year. Borough Council raised it again two years later in anticipation of the work to be done on the main municipal lot, which had been neglected for 15-20 years. The rate remains today at 2.125 mils, generating \$91,000/year.

In 2015, the Borough Engineer evaluated the work to be done on borough streets, and it amounts to \$528,714 of future road repairs, maintenance, and improvements. President Walker stated that the Borough Council has the responsibility to prepare an annual budget to run the municipality, causing the members to evaluate expenses, revenues, and consider alternative ways to fund the needs of Newtown Borough.

President Walker invited the public to share their views regarding paid parking, pointing out the importance for Borough Council to hear from Borough residents and merchants first, followed by interested citizens outside of the Borough.

Solicitor Bolla announced that he will need to leave the meeting at 6:15 P.M.

## **Public to be Heard**

Mr. Bill Smith, Owner of Newtown Jewelers, stated his approval of paid parking and was only concerned with the system the Borough would use. Mr. Walker responded that a presentation would be made later, describing the parking kiosks and how the system would operate.

Mr. Andrew Neville spoke on behalf of Isaac Newton's Restaurant. He noted the filled meeting room and over 1,500 signatures on a petition in opposition to paid parking and a \$1/hour fee. He stated that there was a lack of communication to the public about the paid parking issue and, without his efforts to push for and publicize the meeting, there wouldn't be the turnout this evening. His biggest objections to paid parking was it could drive away businesses, employees, and customers. He reported that 88% of shoppers that travel through the business district are coming from outside of the Borough. Of those shoppers, 78% said they would not shop in Newtown Borough if they had to pay for parking. He believes employees would look for work outside of the Borough as well. He noted that the current Parking Ordinance doesn't allow for paid parking, stating that a vote to purchase parking kiosks for \$135,000 was premature, and didn't believe Council should vote to purchase them this evening. Mr. Neville stated that the municipal parking lot cost \$217,000 and the three parking kiosks cost \$135,000 with installation. He further remarked that \$350,000 would be recouped within 8-12 months, and questioned if that amount of money would be needed annually to maintain streets; noting that he felt it unfair to the businesses, their customers, and employees to pay for streets. President Walker reported that the 3 kiosks cost a total of \$35,000 and the amount generated from paid parking would cover the cost of the machines in 8-12 months depending on the fee structure which is undetermined.

Mr. Joe McKernan, resident and realtor in town, added that he was disappointed that parking spots were numbered in the municipal lot without a formal plan regarding the change of a Parking Ordinance. He stated that he would not support the reelection of anyone on Council if they install paid parking, noting that the real estate business hasn't been this strong since 2006 and believes a decision for paid parking would be detrimental.

Additional comments in opposition to paid parking included concerns regarding the inconveniences of dealing with parking kiosks in addition to paying and finding a parking place. There was concern that more people will look to park on side streets, taking it away from residents with no off-street parking. A new resident cautioned Council about towns in New Jersey that have turned people like himself away with the high cost of parking. A resident and business owner fears that goods and services found on State Street can easily be replaced by those available in nearby stores with free parking, and that paid parking lessens the Borough's charm. Another resident asked Council to look at other alternatives since she avoids visiting places that charge for parking.

An additional opinion was shared, stating a belief that people will resist the change to paid parking at first but, that they will adjust and continue coming to Newtown Borough.

### **Joint Presentation by DEVO & Associates - David Borgese & Daryl Volgarino and Parkeon Parking Systems - Sean Renn**

Mr. Walker introduced Mr. Dave Borgese of DEVO, a local distributor for Parkeon Parking Systems. Mr. Borgese understood the objections from the audience, but encouraged the public to consider what the parking kiosks offer in addition to payment for parking. He then introduced Mr. Sean Renn, Vice-President of Sales & Marketing for Parkeon which is based in Moorestown, NJ.

Mr. Renn stated that Parkeon's goal is not to penalize residents, visitors, or merchants, but rather to help towns and cities thrive. Parkeon has been in business for 40 years and was the first to offer parking kiosks in North America. They have .5 million parking kiosks in North America and 3 million globally. Nationally, they service New York City with 13,000 parking kiosks, Philadelphia, Atlanta and universities including Duke and Harvard. Areas they serve which are similar to Newtown include Radnor Township, Ambler, Doylestown Boro, New Hope Boro, Union Square, and the Bucks County Playhouse. Both DEVO and Parkeon are in close proximity to Newtown, ensuring reliable local service.

Mr. Renn reported that parking kiosks address concerns in addition to parking, which include traffic congestion and added air pollution as drivers circle around in search for free parking spaces. He stated that merchants want parking spaces to turn over and become available for customers, which is a benefit of parking kiosks that can be programmed for any length of time. The income generated would be reinvested in capital improvements of the parking lot and Borough streets. Municipalities also use parking kiosks to gather data which can be used in numerous ways, as well as dispensing merchant coupons, providing new business information, and promotional events. To encourage repeat business, validation codes for free parking and tokens are successfully used by merchants in some municipalities.

He stated that employees are usually parking in the best free spaces that are intended for customers, and are therefore the ones most vocally opposed to paid parking.

### **Comments by Borough Council**

Councillor King reported that paid parking has been in discussion for over a year, and is not something that Council intended to secretly pass through. He remarked that this meeting was very helpful to consider both positives and negatives.

Councillor Grunde-McLaughlin noted that Council has heard from a cross-section of the public including residents, business owners, and area residents. She noted that comments on the petition raised a variety of concerns, which included driving businesses and customers away and disturbing the charm of Newtown Borough.

Councillor Gusty agreed with both of the Councillors and encouraged more people to speak during the second Public to be Heard. He did clarify that parking fees do not create a windfall for the Borough, and there will not be a \$350,000/year income stream. He encouraged the public to come to the budget meeting next week to gain a better understanding of the Borough's finances. Mr. Gusty also stated that the cost of parking, if it were to be implemented, has been discussed but not been determined. Councillor Gusty also noted that the parking lot is not being used as intended when it's stated that employees move their cars after 3-hour time periods to different parking places.

Councillor Warren added that he hadn't seen this many people at a Council Meeting before and was pleased to see Democracy in action. He reassured the public that paid parking was not a done deal, and corrected an earlier statement noting that paid parking has been in discussion since 2009 when Mr. Allan Smith first proposed a parking garage. The objectives stated by Mr. Borgese of DEVO to decrease traffic congestion, open up parking spaces, drive traffic to merchants, and help with capital improvements, are things he believes the community wants, and what Borough Council has been working to achieve. It wasn't until the last Work Session where one person spoke in opposition, that Council realized the need to allow for a special public meeting to hear from business owners, owners of commercial real estate, employees, residents, and visitors. He thanked members of the audience for sharing their perspectives, and invited more people to speak on this issue. He stated he is neither for nor against the parking meters, but wants what the community wants.

Councillor McDermott agreed with all of the comments made, and welcomed hearing the voice of the community as well as the other side and some of the benefits it offers. He asked Mr. Renn if there were any negative results to installed parking kiosks in addition to the positive outcomes he shared. Mr. Renn stated that he cannot recall selling parking kiosks to any community which later asked to return them. He did note one incidence in South Lake Tahoe, CA where they debated the issue after purchasing 30 kiosks and only have 4 or 5 in use.

Mr. Borgese stated that his intent is to offer a service that is welcomed by the community, and doesn't turn people against their local government officials. There are 125 clients using parking kiosks and the largest one has only 40 meters, demonstrating their presence in mostly small towns.

Mayor Swartz thanked everyone for attending and reported that, since becoming Mayor, he has been working with the business community in Newtown Borough so that they can become an entity to speak as one voice. The amount of parking remains an issue, and he stated that Mr. Allan Smith will provide more space in the parking garage that is planned in the Steeple View development. Mr. Swartz invited those in attendance to become active in the Traffic & Parking Management Committee to assist with finding solutions.

Councillor Grunde-McLaughlin stated that the Chancellor Center was selected for this meeting to ensure that there would be enough room for a large crowd, and encouraged everyone to feel welcome to speak.

## Public to be Heard

Additional comments and concerns from the public were largely in opposition to paid parking, and included:

- Employees not wanting , and possibly feeling unsafe, to walk 3-4 blocks to work
- Raising taxes further to pay for the parking lot
- Newtown Borough is not the same destination spot as New Hope and Doylestown
- Parking kiosks could extend to residential streets and be in conflict with the historic charm standards set by HARB; their appearance is unattractive
- Request for a Professional Parking Consultant to evaluate
- Current permit parking will go away with the Steeple View project
- Coupons and validating paid parking from the kiosks cuts into merchants' profits
- Kiosks can encourage customers and employees to park where they belong
- Parking revenues generated might solve the Mercantile Group's issue of not wanting the responsibility for decorating on State Street
- The community could work together to make this work
- Recognition was made regarding the difficulty of Council to please everyone
- Question was made if kiosks would reduce traffic congestion, given there would be free parking on some streets
- Letter was given to Mercantile Group, consisting of 14 businesses, stating all numbered spaces with 3-hour parking would be charged \$1/hour and additional time could be added on a phone app
- Suggestion to hear from another parking company if Council proceeds
- Traffic & Parking Committee have worked to resolve these issues in the past, and discussions regarding permit parking on residential streets & valet parking didn't proceed from the Committee
- Inventory of parking is limited and at a premium
- Solution will require businesses, employees, residents and Council coming together
- Paid parking won't keep the majority of people who enjoy Newtown Borough from coming to shop and eat
- Rejecting paid parking will require another alternative, or taxes will be raised
- Statement was made that people using the parking lot should pay for it rather than the 2500 residents
- Newtown Borough has 12th highest millage rate in Bucks County
- Plans for paid parking are not listed on the website
- Question was made regarding Council's ability to balance the budget

In response to a question about Borough Council's next meeting, President Walker stated that the annual budget meeting is on October 27, 2016. Mr. Walker stated that paid parking is not an attempt to balance the Borough's budget, but rather an attempt to find new sources of revenue to sustain and maintain the infrastructure of Newtown Borough. The Borough has a balanced budget, using the zero-based budgeting method which has been done for years, and is not in a difficult financial position. He stated that

Borough Council has a responsibility to look at alternatives to generate revenue that make sense for Newtown. Mr. Walker reported that paid parking is not cast in concrete, however there was a motion to approve them at the last Work Session to find out Council's opinion on parking kiosks. The valuable input received this evening will be reflected upon and discussed further at upcoming meetings, and reassured the public that there was no intention to vote on parking kiosks at tonight's meeting. He expressed appreciation for everyone's input and agreed that this is the Democratic process in action.

The meeting adjourned at 7:24 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy S. Musto  
Borough Secretary

#### ATTENDEES

Julia & Warren Woldorf  
Ted Schmidt  
Jeff Werner  
Ingrid Sofield  
Andrew Neville  
Glenn Blakely  
Bob Bartels  
Doug & Susan Turner  
Dave Young  
Lana Newman  
Charles & Bobbie Lewis  
Evan & Denise Lambros  
Melissa Lanahan  
Andrea Bayford  
Karolyn Fisher  
Dave Callahan  
George Dutton  
Fern Wisnewski  
Chuck Alwine  
Bill Newell  
David Witchell  
Beth Goodman  
Joe Michelin  
Kathy McCafferty  
Carol Richardson  
Cathy Buzik

Lou Schiller  
Devyn Vacca  
Joe McKernan  
Becky Betz  
Liz Warren  
Sharon Brown  
Kathy Buczek  
Nancy & Randy Scurlock  
Ron Ricci  
Marianne McKee  
Bill Smith  
Anne Marie Argiro  
Dottie Sconyers  
Randy Yardley  
Larry & Laurie Luff  
Karolyn Fisher  
Bob Musto  
Paul Blancato  
Allan Smith  
Bob Swajkos  
Isabel & Tony Godwin  
Andrew Jacobs  
Victoria Swartz  
Terry Sykes  
Brian Titus  
Maggie Lyons

Gerard O'Malley

Andrew Schuyler