

Downtown Association

Business Improvement Area

496 Queen Street East

Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6A 1Z8

www.saultdowntown.com

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**DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION****MEMBERSHIP PARKING SOLUTION REPORT TO THE CITY OF SAULT STE. MARIE**

On July 10, 2024, at the Downtown Association (DTA) Board of Directors Meeting under agenda item 7, the minutes and summary of solutions to the parking discrepancies that resulted from the DTA Parking Subcommittee Town Hall on July 4, 2024, were reviewed, discussed, and compiled. This Townhall engagement was the result of The City of Sault Ste. Marie City Council meeting agenda item 8.3.1 with respect to the Council approved Parking Agreement between the North Shore Tribal Council and the Sault Ste. Marie Housing Corporation. The DTA Board of Directors approved a motion to forward these solutions to the parking discrepancies to The City of Sault Ste. Marie to resolve these concerns.

Below are the listed solutions for consideration of implementation and the approved motion by the DTA Board of Directors.

1. Downtown Parking Garage/Facilities.
2. Reserved parking for Downtown business customers only closest to businesses along Queen Street and designated parking pass areas, with visible signage to indicate these areas as well as enforcement of pass holders parking outside the designated areas within the lots.
3. Signage to direct parking to different available lots for pass holders.
4. Additional public transit funding to make transit a more viable option as well as having a dedicated Downtown transit loop to get people accustomed to parking in one place and utilizing transit to travel within the Downtown with a decreased need for vehicles to decrease the demand for parking.
5. Cap the issuing of parking passes for the next 12 months and review at the end of the period whether to increase the number of parking passes allotted annually.
6. Commitment to consistent snow removal within the lots to ensure there is a full complement of available parking in each lot through the winter months.
7. Acquisition of land/buildings on Wellington Street to dedicate for parking.

Motion: Submission of Membership Parking Solution Report to The City of Sault Ste. Marie.

Moved by Nicholas Rosset, Seconded by Paul Scornaienchi.

Approved unanimously. None Opposed.

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DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION PARKING SUBCOMMITTEE

TOWN HALL MEETING REPORT

JULY 4, 2024 | MANE STREET CAFÉ | 626 QUEEN STREET EAST | 5:15PM

The town hall meeting regarding parking issues in regarding the Brock-Albert, Spring-March, and Bell Avenue parking lots covered a wide range of concerns and proposals after the Parking Agreement made between North Shore Tribal Council (NSTC), the District of Sault Ste. Marie Housing Corporation (SSMHC) and the City of Sault Ste. Marie at the June 24, 2024, City Council meeting. Summary of the main points discussed, and potential solutions suggested:

- 1. Purpose of Meeting and Parking Passes:**
 - The meeting aimed to address parking pass purchases by NSTC and SSMHC as part of a lease agreement.
 - Discussions centered around the need for a solution-based approach.
- 2. Parking Capacity and Data:**
 - Brent Lamming provided data showing a 26% average capacity in parking lots.
 - Questions were raised about the accuracy and validity of parking studies conducted during COVID lockdowns.
- 3. Specific Issues and Concerns Raised:**
 - Businesses expressed concerns about parking availability and the impact on customers.
 - Requests were made for dedicated parking spaces for certain businesses or times (e.g., weddings, funerals).
 - Issues with snow removal, peak times, and variable business hours were highlighted as challenges.
- 4. Proposed Solutions and Suggestions:**
 - Consideration of using other lots or building a parking garage was suggested.
 - Suggestions included revisiting parking enforcement, using signage to reserve spaces, and improving public transit options.
 - Concerns were raised about fairness in issuing parking passes and zoning by-law adherence.
- 5. Responses and Actions:**
 - Discussions involved the possibility of stopping pass sales to address concerns about availability.
 - Commitments were made to review peak times and revisit parking allocation strategies.

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6. Public Perception and Safety:

- Concerns were raised about downtown safety and the adequacy of current parking solutions.

7. Conclusion:

- The meeting concluded with a call for a shift from complaints to constructive solutions and a commitment from City Council to address business concerns appropriately.

Overall, the meeting highlighted a complex interplay of Downtown Association Member and stakeholder interests, data concerns, and logistical challenges in managing downtown parking effectively. The proposed solutions ranged from immediate adjustments in pass allocation to long-term infrastructure considerations such as building new parking facilities.

With this summary of engagement, the Downtown Association Board of Directors will resolve on the direction forward short to long term in respect to this matter at the July 10, 2024 Board of Directors meeting.

The following pages of this report are the minutes of the July 4, 2024, Downtown Association Parking Subcommittee town hall meeting.

The Downtown Association
July 2024 Parking Committee Special Meeting
Minutes



July 4, 2024 / 5:15 PM / Mane Street Café / 626 Queen Street East

Board Members: Nicholas Rosset, Chair; Marnie Stone, Director (Parking Subcommittee Chair); Angela Caputo, City Council Representative; Kristi Cistaro, Treasurer; Jacob Rendell, Director; Angela Romano, Director.

Staff: Nicholas Luck, Executive Director; Ashton Carter, Coordinator.

Attendees: Lisa Vezeau Allen, City Councillor; Sonny Spina, City Councillor; David Helwig, SooToday; Kyle Darbyson, Sault Star; Douglas Millroy, First Local News; Richard Kim, Woolworth Building; Gail Maich, Silver Threads; Tom Vair, CAO, City SSM; Brent Lamming, Deputy CAO, City SSM; Salvatore Marchese, City SSM Planning Department; John Delorenzi, Allora Espresso Imports; Robert Pryor, SOO MRKT; James Wishon, Camera Craft; Joe Fratesi, Stakeholder; John Wilson, Westminster Presbyterian Church; Krista Nolan, Mane Street Co.; Laurie Krezek, Head To Toe Salon and Spa; Krista Williams-Fratesi, Head To Toe Salon and Spa; Anne-Marie Caicco, The Healing Loft.

1. Call meeting to order:

5:16 PM

2. Land Acknowledgment read by Parking Committee Chair, Marnie Stone

3. Approval of the July Parking Committee Special Meeting 2024 Agenda

Moved by Nicholas Rosset. Seconded by James Wishon.

All in favour. None opposed.

4. General Minutes

- Nicholas Rosset presented the July Parking Committee Special Meeting overview.
- Marnie Stone stated the purpose of the Special Meeting is to approach the purchase of parking passes by North Shore Tribal Council (NSTC) in the lease agreement from a solution-based angle.
- John Delorenzi asked if the request for parking was based on the number of employees coming to work.
- Nicholas Rosset stated there is a by-law requirement but no specific determination for parking passes being assigned to people specifically.
- Robert Pryor asked if there was data to determine actual numbers of what parking capacity is being used in

the area

- Brent Lamming stated there is a 26% capacity on average for these parking lots.
- Lisa Vezeau-Allen stated NSTC and DSAB are looking for solutions and to work together – added point of having 50 additional customers in the downtown. Also stated there are visible vacancies in the parking lots at various times during the day. Also stated the need for healthcare providers in the downtown.
- James Wishon asked what time of year the CIMA survey was taken.
- Brent Lamming stated there is constant parking data being collected by commissionaires in addition to the CIMA parking study.
- John DeLorenzi asked how the previous agreement for the demolition of the old DSAB building was reconciled with the new agreement.
- Salvatore Marchese stated City staff coordinated to change the demolition agreement when NSTC expressed an interest in purchasing the old DSAB building.
- Joe Fratesi stated The City and council connected to the sale of the building are being negligent and are using bad data to determine the parking minimums and maximums.
- Brent Lamming stated the data is not bad as it extends beyond the range of the public perception of the survey. It was conducted over the course of 4 years beginning in 2019 and is also being used in conjunction with City SSM parking data, which ranged as far back as 2014.
- Angela Caputo stated the demolition funds in question are set aside on a needs-basis and further, the contention that City Council has done anything “back door”-ish is false.
- Richard Kim stated the issue of this meeting has nothing to do with the business entering the downtown but rather has to do with parking space for patrons of the adjacent businesses who are already there and finding a solution to this discrepancy.
- John Wilson stated in 1965, the parking authority approached Westminster Church to purchase land and a subsequent “provisal” was given that the church would have allotments as per contractual obligations to be able to use the parking lot for their weddings, funerals, and the bargain bin sales when they were needed.
- John Wilson stated the church has had a demonstrated ability to use these parking spaces without the need for a parking pass in the recent past as evidence of this agreement between Westminster Church and The Corporation of The City of Sault Ste. Marie.
- Marnie Stone asked for clarification that John Wilson is asking for a special designation for parking spots.
- John Wilson clarified that there is a physical contract that is specific about the parking spots in question.
- Tom Vair stated the physical “contract” document does not state any specific special designations for parking to Westminster Church, regardless of conversations that may have been had in the past.
- Gail stated there is no parking at her business and that she has to pay extra taxes for parking.
- Marnie Stone suggested that parking passes should be given to acquire parking.
- Gail asked why other lots are not being considered for the pass purchases for this new business.

- Marnie Stone clarified that parking for this lease agreement must be within a certain radius of the business moving into the old DSAB building.
- Laurie Krezek stated that overall, parking is not an issue. However, she believes the study that was used to justify this bulk parking pass purchase is not valid due to it being completed during COVID lockdowns, the timeframe for the parking data collection not fully capturing the reality of parking in the downtown, and discrepancies with open/close hours between businesses.
- Angela Caputo asked to clarify the issue with the CIMA study being done during off months.
- Brent Lamming stated the study was done over a course of time that did include potential off-times.
- Krista Nolan stated that parking data collection by The City is inherently flawed by the times in which they are physically collecting the data and the years in which the study was done were during unprecedented low-times due to COVID lockdowns.
- Krista Nolan stated that business average hours of operation are too variable between independent businesses.
- Jake Rendell asked Brent Lamming how many spots are in the Bell Avenue lot.
- Brent Lamming stated there are 45 spots in that lot.
- Jake Rendell asked if the lot would be at capacity with the overflow from the NSTC spots.
- Brent Lamming stated it would not be at capacity.
- Sony Spina stated the perception of parking versus the reality of parking seems to be the issue – asked if the DTA could share stats to assuage the perception issues businesses are facing in regard to transparency with The City.
- Brent Lamming stated data can be shared with the DTA.
- Marnie Stone stated the DTA will share this information.
- Angela Caputo stated that during the winter months, parking lots are monitored and ploughed when they reach a certain level of capacity.
- Nicholas Rosset stated that when using the maximums to determine the capacity of the lots, it turns out to be well over the maximum for each lot when the numbers are rendered.
- Tom Vair stated that the commissionaire is checking the lots four time a day which The City believes is reasonable to determine the averages for the lots.
- Nicholas Rosset asked if peak times are considered when rendering recommendations to Council on these parking passes.
- Tom Vair stated this may be revisited later to consider a possible other solution.
- Nicholas Rosset asked if it was possible to utilize some of the decrepit houses on Wellington Street to create additional surface parking lots.
- Tom Vair stated the position of The City would be to build a parking “building” as opposed to demolishing

buildings to create more surface lots.

- Nicholas Rosset asked if it is possible to revoke the by-law variance and consider a different solution.
- Tom Vair stated that a commitment has been made to NSTC.
- Brent Lamming stated there are opportunities to consider other lots in the future.
- Krista Nolan stated her business was devastated by COVID and peak times are not being taken into consideration vis-a-vis a literal human issue of commissionaires not being present at lunchtime. Also stated that winter months will present a problem with spots being buried under snow and some snow removal commitments would be needed to make that feasible.
- Krista stated that businesses had no time to consider the issue and were not consulted and should have been.
- Joe Fratesi stated that the main issue with the perception from business owners to City Council was that businesses were not in fact consulted where it was stated they were.
- Marnie Stone stated that a shift from complaints to solutions would be helpful and asked if the Windsor Park parking lot could be used to compensate for some of these parking stressors.
- John DeLorenzi stated that the spots need to be considered as possibly assigned for certain businesses.
- Brent Lamming stated that this would be counter to the current parking standard of “first come, first serve.”
- Jake Rendell asked if there was an option to change the commitment timeframe while NSTC considers their own solutions to this issue.
- **Angela Caputo asked if there was a possibility to stop selling passes at present time to assuage anxieties about parking passes being sold out.**
- Laurie Krezek stated the passes are already sold out for the year.
- Laurie Krezek asked if this would prevent annual parking passes from being purchased by other annual pass holders.
- Angela Caputo clarified that it would not prevent annual pass holders from purchasing passes but instead would prevent additional passes from being sold.
- **Anne-Marie Caicco suggested that a parking garage be built to fix the issue of lack of parking.**
- John Wilson asked what the solution would be if there was a funeral to take place at Westminster Church with these parking changes.
- Brent Lamming suggested there are plenty of spots nearby.
- Laurie Krezek suggested that it is inappropriate to ask vulnerable folks (elders, children) to walk any extended distance due to security issues in the downtown.
- Sonny Spina suggested that Divison 2 will help alleviate these safety & security issues in the downtown.
- Sony Spina stated that parking is a luxury not a right. Conferred with earlier suggestions.

- Marnie Stone thanks Council for their participation and asked for reassurance that Council hears the concerns of business owners and that they will be addressed in an appropriate fashion.
- **Angela Romano suggested carpooling/transit to shuttle DSAB employees to and from the building to alleviate parking stressors.**
- **Angela Caputo suggested that signage might be used to reserve spaces closer to businesses that are earmarked for “downtown shoppers only”.**
- Krista suggested that previous parking enforcements should be revisited to assist with parking stressors. Also asked if there would be reporting for parking issues in the downtown to capture data.
- Brent Lamming suggested that all issues or complaints about parking be directed to the City parking coordinator. (Nicole?)
- **John Wilson suggested signage to direct parking preferences to guide the flow of parking traffic.**
- Angela Caputo suggested that completely filling the lots by way of directive signage could potentially harm adjacent businesses.
- Kristi Cistaro stated the obstacles that businesses face means they should be made a priority in the discussion and suggested City Council does not create another obstacle by viewing these concerns as pushback.
- Laurie Krezek suggested not giving as many passes to NSTC because they don't know how many employees they will have.
- Marnie Stone asked Laurie Krezek what the ideal solution would be.
- Laurie Krezek stated it would be dedicated parking for DSAB.
- Joe Fratesi stated zoning by-laws are not being respected.
- Richard Kim asked if it would be feasible to build a structure on the current lot to increase parking for NSTC.
- Tom Vair stated they do not have the room.
- A stakeholder asked what was happening at the St. Lukes building.
- Marnie Stone asked if they would lease the spot for parking.
- Robert Pryor stated Mill Market has current parking problems.
- Tom Vair stated Mill Market uses City Hall parking on the weekends.
- Laurie Krezek asked why others would be declined for similar by-law restrictions but NSTC was given an exception.
- Tom Vair clarified that NSTC asked for a parking by-law variance and were told they need to secure 90 spots, at which point they asked The City if 90 spots were available in the municipal parking lots.
- Laurie Kezek asked why other businesses are denied similar requests.

- Tom Vair stated he is unaware of that specific situation.

- Laurie Krezek stated the average person doesn't want to walk to businesses if they can't park directly in front of the business they are visiting.

- Jake Rendell stated that additional funding for transit would help alleviate the transition to getting the population walking as opposed to driving.

- Richard Kim stated his clients won't use transit and further stated that SSM "is not and will never be" a walking city.

5. Adjournment

Moved by Marnie Stone. Seconded by Nicholas Rosset.

All in favour. None opposed.