

October 10, 2008

TO: Maynard Board of Selectmen
FROM: Bill Cranshaw and Sally Bubier

RE: Parking Policy – Short-term Parking

We have concluded that provision of “Red Meters” with 15-minute time limits would be beneficial to the economic viability of the downtown. These spaces would increase the availability of parking for those making short trips to retail shops, banks and ATMs; picking up orders at restaurants; and making deliveries to offices and residences.

It is recognized that the proper mix of time-limits for meters is necessary to support the vitality of the downtown, and further, that due to the high traffic volumes using these very-short-term spaces not all on-street spaces are appropriate for Red Meters. Accordingly, we recommend that a policy be established to evaluate requests for short-term parking designations.

The goal of the policy would be to increase the availability of safe and convenient parking for customers of all businesses in the downtown. The short-term parking locations should serve multiple destinations and should be located where the high-traffic activity can best be accommodated. The specific recommendations are as follows.

Time Limits

A maximum of a 15-minute time limit is recommended.

Hours of Operation:

We recommend that the Red Meters be in effect from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, Monday through Saturday with holidays excluded. The hours of operation are different than for other on-street parking (generally 8:00am to 6:00pm, Monday through Saturday). Because of the mix of uses in the downtown, the extended hours of operation are necessary to provide access for ATMs, restaurant pick-ups, etc.

We do not recommend that the hours or days vary for Red Meters in different locations. It is very important that there is consistency so that parkers can readily understand the use of the Red Meter spaces, wherever they may be located.

Signage:

The metered spaces should be readily identifiable for the driver as a “special” parking space and there should be no misunderstandings regarding the use of the parking spaces.

We recommend that the meter head be painted red and that the time limit and hours of operation be clearly identified with a supplemental sign on the meter post. Options for custom-text “post panels” (such as on stop sign posts and crosswalk sign posts) should be used if any Red Meters are installed in areas with poor lighting.

Parking fees:

We recommend that parking meters be used to facilitate enforcement, but we recommend that there be no charge for the parking spaces. Old mechanical meters could be used and a twist of the dial would provide the maximum time limit.

Location of spaces:

The location of the Red Meter spaces is an extremely important consideration as they must be located where they are readily visible, where they serve many destinations, where they can safely accommodate the high volume of traffic, and where they do not adversely impact the mix of parking options in the downtown.

- The Red Meters should be highly visible to the approaching driver. The first parking space on a block (or after a driveway) is a good location, but the last parking space on a block may not be because the Red Meter and associated signage might be obscured by the car in the adjacent parking space.
- The Red Meter spaces should be easy for the driver to enter and exit. The Red Meter spaces should not be located between other spaces or similarly require back-in parallel parking. Examples of preferred locations on Nason Street are (1) the single space in front of the Middlesex Bank, and (2) the space after the fire hydrant in front of Dunia. Cars can be driven forward into both of these spaces.
- The Red Meter parking spaces should be dispersed to accommodate the maximum number of destinations, and to avoid the loss of too many two-hour parking spaces. In general, Red Meter spaces should be located at least 150' to 200' apart on one-way streets. On two-way streets there may be a reason to consider locating Red Meters closer than 150' but on opposite sides of the street.

Evaluation of Requests:

Requests for Red Meter spaces on the core streetblocks of (1) Nason Street and (2) Main Street east of Nason Street, should be made by multiple business owners, land owners, or downtown residents. It is recommended that all requests for those locations must be submitted by at least three unrelated persons or businesses that may be affected by the requested Red Meter.

Requests for Red Meter spaces at peripheral locations with lower concentrations of businesses uses, such as Main Street west of Walnut Street, can be considered without the requirement for three unrelated persons participating.

The request for a Red Meter parking space should be evaluated with regards to the area rather than the specific parking space. Other potential locations nearby should be assessed as to the physical characteristics of visibility (potential signage, lighting, etc.) and safe vehicle access. All locations should be evaluated as to the types of parkers the Red Meter would benefit, and those parkers it might displace.

Locations of approved Red Meters should not be considered permanent. If a Red Meter is requested on a street where another Red Meter has previously been installed then the locations of both should be assessed. It may be that two Red Meters should be provided, but their optimal locations might require the existing Red Meter to be relocated.