

City doubles fines for parking meter violations

Written by Kristyn Halbig Ziehm
Wednesday, 02 December 2009 19:09

Port aldermen raise penalty to \$10 but agree to allow two-hour parking on downtown streets

Parking scofflaws will have to pony up a little more cash for their fines if they are caught lingering too long in a space regulated by a meter.

The Common Council on Tuesday also agreed to allow people to park on North Franklin Street and East Grand Avenue in downtown Port for two hours instead of one.

The recommendation by the Traffic Safety Committee and Main Street Board was made to allow shoppers and diners to spend more time downtown, City Administrator Mark Grams said.

Aldermen approved increasing the fine for parking meter violations from \$5 to \$10, a move aldermen said would levy a single fine amount for virtually all parking violations.

The lone exception is for handicapped parking violations. Aldermen increased the minimum fines for these violations from \$35 to \$50. The maximum fine is \$300.

The fine for parking violations that don't involve parking meters have been \$10 for several years, officials said, adding they don't know why they city adopted a multi-tiered system.

If violators don't pay their parking tickets within three days, the fine increases to \$15. After 10 days, the fine is \$20 and after 28 days it increases to \$35.

Officials have said the single fine amount will simplify collection of fines, saying many people send in the incorrect amount and police must refund the excess or collect the additional money needed.

Grams said the police department is expected to bring in almost \$35,000 from parking violations and permits — a small portion of the department's \$2.8 million budget — although he did not have a breakdown of revenue from each category.

Monthly parking permits for municipal lots in downtown may be purchased from

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the police department for \$15.

Police Chief Richard Thomas said last month that his department had issued 696 parking meter tickets and 368 overtime parking tickets, as well as 240 tickets for snow ordinance violations and 190 for parking in prohibited areas — all \$10 fines except for the parking meter violations.

Using the two-tiered fine structure, the city would collect \$11,460 for these tickets if the fines were all paid in a timely manner.

In 2007, the city's revenue from parking tickets issued in the marina parking lot was \$2,900 and fines and permits to park in municipal lots was \$28,260 — most of that from fines, officials said.

In 2006, the department earned \$2,115 from tickets in the marina lot and \$31,379 in fines and parking permits, they said.

The city's parking fines are in line with those in most other county communities, according to an analysis done by the police department. Parking tickets are \$10 in Grafton, Fredonia and Thiensville, \$20 in Cedarburg and \$25 in Mequon.

Parking issues may continue to be a point of contention in the city. The Traffic Safety Committee was expected on Wednesday to discuss parking around the Ozaukee County Administration Center.

Grams said county officials are concerned about the amount of available parking on the two Wednesday mornings each month when the County Board meets.

To help alleviate concerns, Grams said, officials may consider eliminating two-hour parking restrictions on about eight spaces on Milwaukee Street near the Administration Center.