

Village grapples with parking restriction plan

Written by Steve Ostermann
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Proposed ordinance for two-hour limit in downtown municipal lots tabled to give businesses more input

Village of Grafton officials are considering adopting an ordinance that would limit parking to two hours in two downtown municipal lots — a move they said will help ease parking congestion.

However, the proposal remains on hold pending input from downtown businesses that have voiced concerns about how the restriction would impact their operations.

The Public Safety Committee on Tuesday tabled the proposed ordinance, which calls for a two-hour restriction in public lots on 13th Avenue between Bridge Street and Highway 60 (Washington Street).

If approved by the Village Board, the restriction would be in effect from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays. The affected parking areas would be a 61-space lot next to the Grafton Village Center and a 47-space lot to the south along 13th Avenue.

Both lots are heavily used by employees and customers of nearby businesses, including seven operating in the Village Center. Some of the business owners have voiced support for the parking restrictions as a way to provide more open spaces.

However, the committee delayed action on the proposed ordinance after hearing objections from other business owners who said the two-hour restriction would inconvenience customers dining or viewing sporting events at restaurants and taverns, using salons or visiting more than one store.

Some business owners said they were unaware their employees are parking in municipal lots. Others suggested all employees of downtown businesses be prohibited from using the lots.

“In light of the additional concerns expressed, the Public Safety Committee urged the businesses to get together and come up with alternative solutions,” Village Administrator Darrell Hofland said.

Hofland said the ordinance, which was proposed by the village’s planning and development staff, would expand the parking restrictions recommended for the Village Center lot last month by the Community Development Authority.

“The concern was that just restricting parking in the Village Center lot could create a similar problem in the other public lot,” Hofland said.

The ordinance was also recommended by Village Planning Director Mike Rambousek and the Project Management Team, a group that includes village staff and representatives of downtown business and property owners.

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Hofland said there are several dozen spaces in other downtown public lots that will have unrestricted parking hours, including one on 13th Avenue north of Washington Street that has 23 spaces. Village officials have said that lot is underused because of the lack of a pedestrian crossing signal through heavy Washington Street traffic.

That concern is expected to be alleviated this summer when pedestrian-activated traffic signals are installed at the intersection.

The Public Safety Committee asked downtown businesses to prepare alternative parking solutions in time for discussion at the next CDA meeting Wednesday, June 2. The CDA is expected to consider suggestions before sending the issue back to the committee.