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Port Safety Committee backs plan to remove some meters, designate areas for permits, two-hour use

Changes to two parking lots on Port Washington's lakefront were recommended Tuesday by the Traffic Safety Committee.

The parking meters should be removed from the lot at the north end of the north slip, the committee recommended.

The northern row of parking places should be designated for two-hour parking, the committee said, and the southern row for permit parking from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and two-hour parking at other times.

The permit parking is largely intended for employees of Franklin Energy, which is moving into the nearby Smith Bros. Marketplace building, City Administrator Mark Grams said.

However, he added, anyone with a permit would be able to park there.

Right now, Grams said, the lot is seldom used except on weekends, when fishermen park there.

Because it is seldom used, the city should not impose a two-hour limit on the northern parking aisle but instead allow unrestricted parking there to encourage people to use the lot, Public Works Director Rob Vanden Noven, the committee chairman, said.

"I wouldn't restrict parking until the parking lot is overflowing with cars," he said. "I'd rather have it unrestricted and restrict it later if needed."

Restricting parking in the future would be difficult, Grams said.

"Then you're going to get this whole room full of people screaming because you're taking away their unrestricted parking," he said.

The owners of the Port Shopping Center, which is next to the lot, have also requested the city designate the area for two-hour parking, Grams said.

"They said they can't get a tenant because there's not enough parking on-site," he said. "Eventually, the shopping center's going to need it."

But Vanden Noven noted that Port Main Street is working on parking lot improvements, including configuring the shopping center's lot for two-way traffic — something the owners are resisting.

"We need to get their cooperation," he said. "Maybe this should be part of an overall parking package instead of something we do piecemeal."

Ald. Dan Becker, a member of the committee, said two-hour parking would be consistent with the restrictions elsewhere in downtown.

“The two-hour parking would be an improvement over the meters. People avoid them like the plague,” he said.

The committee also recommended designating five stalls in the lot behind Smith Bros. Marketplace and Harry’s Restaurant for 30-minute parking from April to November.

The stalls, which are in the far northeastern corner near the Main Street cul-de-sac, are intended to be used by charter fishermen and their clients when they load and unload supplies, Grams said.

The 30-minutes parking was requested by charter boat captains and recommended by the Harbor Commission, he said.

“Anyone can still park there. You just can’t park there for more than 30 minutes,” Grams said. “At Dockside Deli, that’s probably enough time for people to run in and pick up lunch.”

The Common Council is expected to review both recommendations when it meets Tuesday, Aug. 3, and act on them at its Tuesday, Aug. 17, meeting.