

I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to bring this exciting opportunity before Council on behalf of the Smiths Falls Core Stores Group.

Not only does it deal with my personal pet peeve of business owners and operators, staff, volunteers and others parking at meters pass the 2 hour limit by plugging their meters all day resulting in a shortage of spaces for customers to park but it also addresses the issue of beautifying the downtown core to make it a destination of choice for those who live in Smiths Falls as well as those outside of Smiths Falls.

A little over a month ago I was in my store at the corner of Beckwith & William working at my computer desk which looks out a large window onto the street. I noticed 2 vehicles which I know very well sitting in the first 2 parking spots on William St. W. for the second time that week. One vehicle belongs to a merchant who has a business on Beckwith St and the other belongs to a person who volunteers at a local store. I knew the owners of these vehicles would be parking for the entire day returning every 2 hours to plug more money into the meters because they have done so on so many, many other days! I park in the Market Street parking lot and walk the short block to work every day in sun, rain, snow, cold, humidity and it really irks me to see others taking up parking spots that are meant for customers when they are very capable of parking at a lot and walking to work too.

I have spoken to town staff over the years about people abusing the 2 hour limit and have been told that bylaw officers can no longer chalk tires because it is private property and the only thing they can legally do is stand there for two hours without letting the vehicle out of their sight. I have also been told that they record stem values but I don't see much evident of them being very successful with this tactic.

This occurrence is not unique to my block as it happens day in and day out on all the blocks in downtown and I am sure many of my fellow merchants here today would agree with me.

So as I am sitting there staring at these 2 vehicles for the 100th time I decided to go online and search to see if I can figure out how other communities enforce their 2 hour limits. I did discover that several communities (Edmonton, Calgary, Woodstock, Saskatoon and others) have it written right in their parking bylaw that enforcement officers can put an erasable chalk mark on the tread face of the tire to determine how long a vehicle has been parked at a spot. If these communities can chalk tires then why can't Smiths Falls?

As I continued my way through the thousands of hits that Google returned I stumbled on an article titled "Turning Small Change Into Big Changes" at a site called Walkable Streets. I started to read this article and my head just started to spin with excitement and a feeling of we could do this here in Smiths Falls and make a real difference in our downtown core. Not only would it solve some of the parking issues but it would also help to finance the request to clean up and beautify the downtown that our Smiths Falls Core Store Group brought to Council last month. I fired off an email to our Core Store Group with the link to the site and several members replied with the same excitement.

I have included links to several internet pages as well as copies of a couple of the articles in my handout.

The concept in these articles is simple you charge fair market price for curb parking and return that parking revenue for public improvements in that metered area.

The goal is to have a meter fee that will produce an occupancy rate of about 85% with 15% of your parking spaces being vacant at any given time. This will allow curb side parking to be efficient. The spaces will be well used but readily available. Since there would be available vacant parking spots cars will not be cruising looking for a space resulting in less traffic congestion, safer crosswalks for pedestrians, less wasted fuel and less air pollution. This will also encourage rapid parking turnover so drivers will park, make their purchases and leave so that other drivers can use the spaces to do the same.

I know there will be some out there that will fear that charging more for the meters will drive customers away from the downtown but by dedicating the downtown parking meter revenue back to that area to pay for capital improvements that can attract customers and new businesses downtown such as cleaning sidewalks, picking up garbage, flower planters, street furniture, tree grates, light fixtures, directional signage, sidewalk repairs, improving store facades and increasing security. Not only does this provide a meaningful amount of revenue for a dramatic amount of downtown improvements which will attract people to the downtown, but it will also help business owners to accept and defend the meters because the revenue is providing substantial downtown improvements.

The following are some suggestions to Council on how to improve the curb side parking issue:

- Replace all meters at one time with new up to date meters. We need meters that work! How many times have we heard our customers complain that the meter wasn't working? There is lots of great new technology out there from meters with solar batteries to meters that will accept preloaded cards or tokens. There are also companies that you can enter into service agreements with who will lease and service equipment
- Charge a fair market price for hourly parking to achieve a delicate balance between discouraging daylong parking, but also keeping it affordable for shoppers
- Consider different hourly rates and time limits for different streets – charge more for the prime locations (Beckwith St. and cross streets), another price for the rest of the meters and even less for parking in the lots
- Enforce the parking time limits by chalking tires or using a hand held device
- Increase the fine for exceeding the set time limit at a meter. \$5 is not much of a deterrent to not plug the meter all day but a \$20 ticket would be!
- Discontinue the 10 minute warning – meters currently have a built in 3 minute grace period – this practice is losing revenue (both in parking fees and tickets) that could be reinvested in the downtown
- Discontinue the free parking in the month of December (on that 1st day of December the parking lot on Market is empty because the daylong users start parking on the street for the free parking)
- Consider extending the hours of operation of the meters to include Saturdays as daylong parking at meters is an issue that day as well for some of our businesses
- Develop a marketing campaign to tell shoppers what their meter money is funding – signage right on meter, newspaper articles, etc.
- Look at ways to create more revenue from more parking e.g. could the town purchase the Rideau Hotel gut the inside to make a multi-leveled parking garage while leaving the outside in tact?; could partnerships with building owners be entered into to put ticket dispensing machines into some of the parking lots currently not being used by tenants (Medical Center, lot behind Rideau Hotel, parking lots behind the Main and William East businesses)?; could ticket dispensing machines be put into the Community Center parking lot? Think outside the box! Be creative!

When returning the net revenue to the metered area the first priority should be in making this area clean and safe. This could include hiring staff to only work in the metered district to pick up garbage, sweep

the sidewalks, etc. Once the Clean and Safe program is underway then net revenue should be used for a Streetscape Project to purchase street furniture, light fixtures, tree grates, brickwork, flower pots, garbage cans, recycling bins, directional signs, bicycle stands, seasonal decorations, street art etc.. And finally any remaining funds could be used for sidewalk and street maintenance, improving storefront facades, increased police foot patrols etc.

Smiths Falls needs to use our parking spaces more efficiently and reinvest the net revenue back into the metered area. In 2008 the revenue of the Parking Meters was \$53,940. This does not include an additional \$6,989.00 for the parking lots or the \$30,445 in parking fines and county court fines. If the town did nothing else but increase the current meter fee from .25 cents for 1 hour and 15 minutes to perhaps .50 cents and re-invested that additional amount back to the downtown that would result an increase in the revenue of \$54,000. That \$54,000 would certainly go a long way to improving the downtown and making Smiths Falls Sensational!

We request that Council consider directing town staff to start enforcing the 2 hour parking limit immediately by using an erasable chalk mark on the tread face of the tire or by using a handheld device to record data and increase the fine for exceeding the 2 hour time limit from \$5 to \$20.

We would also request that Council consider creating policies to 1) charge performance based prices for curb parking and 2) return the net revenue from the meters and fines to the metered area to pay for added public services and improvements within that area.

Thank you.

Website links

Walkable Streets

<http://www.walkablestreets.com/>

Turning Small Change into Big Changes

<http://shoup.bol.ucla.edu/SmallChange.pdf>

Donald Shoup – Professor of Urban Planning

<http://shoup.bol.ucla.edu/>

Video by Dom Nozzi describing how to solve the parking problem

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-5029224235660662505&hl=en#>

Parking Today

<http://www.parkingtoday.com/>