

Wed, Nov 09, 2022 6:00PM

Item 22-1462: Add \$6,480 to Public Works Concrete Reconstruction Delete \$6,480 of Council Parking Permits

Common Council

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Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 10:24

And we will start with 22-1462 add \$6,480 to public works concrete reconstruction, delete \$6,480 of council parking permits from page 299 of the Public Works and page 57 of the Common Council. Do I hear a motion on this item? All right, there is a motion and a second. So, I will open this one up for discussion. All right, Alder Doran.

Alderson Chad Doran (District 15) 11:26

Thank you. I guess what, what I'm trying to do with this this year, is trying to find a happy medium that allows for our colleagues who wish to use parking permit at the expense of tax dollars to still be able to do that. But in a what I think is a more manageable way, given that, at least in this this particular year half of the council is already not using a parking permit to begin with. So what I discussed with staff was, was reducing the budget for this down to what amounts to what would be the cost of one parking permit, but to do so in a way that allows council members who wish to actually seek reimbursement through the staff or through I guess the finance department on a whether it would be a monthly basis or however we would work it out, but not for in the parking ramp [but] at the rate of the parking meters, which are also closer and more convenient for all of us than the parking ramp is anyway. So that way, you know for those of us who still want to use it can do so whether you choose to do it once a month or for every meeting you come down for. That's your prerogative. And then for those who don't want to utilize a parking permit, we're not charging the taxpayers for something that we're not using. So, I think it's a compromise that hopefully works for all of us. And I think it's something that we should support. Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 13:13

All right, real quick, I would like to ask Director Block one question. I—number for that one, please? All right. So, I know we're discussing primarily this item about moving the budget amendment. But Alder Doran making the mention of reimbursements, I just want to tackle that real quick, because I don't believe that would be quite on topic with this item. But that would be more administrative effort for the staff to receive those receipts from us on a monthly, weekly basis process through that and all that correct? That would be staff time?

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 13:53

That's a correct statement.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 13:54

Okay. Thank you. All right. Next, in the queue I see Alder Van Zeeland.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 14:01

Thank you, Chair. I'm not going to revive my discussion about the parking pass that we've had for the last year. I—and I'm not going to go into the history of the parking pass, which our resident historian told me actually goes back decades, that alders used to place a card on their dashboard so that they didn't have to pay for parking when they were downtown. I think I'll just start with the fact that I we've been told over and over that our staff is overloaded and adding something like this is not something that I see a value in staff hours. The staff hours are going to outweigh the savings in the parking pass, especially because alders already turned in the past as if

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they're not using them. This isn't something that's being abused. And the it's funding the parking utility so it's essentially just moving an expense from one area to another.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 15:07

And I'll just say, I don't think anybody is happy about this state of our budget right now, you know that we are in a position where we have a lot of debt to pay off from projects that none of us had really anything to do with. But doing this job means making really hard decisions, and I just find this in particular and the next item to be performative. I feel like it's trying to make people believe that we are saving them money when nothing is really going to make a dent in any of our concrete projects. It's, it just feels like political theater, and trying to fool our citizens or stir up controversy where there isn't any and. And I feel like after yesterday, I can say that most everyone I know is really sick and tired of this kind of stuff. You know, it might be how they do things in Madison or DC, but I don't think it's acceptable here. And I would encourage my colleagues to vote against this amendment and the following amendment. Thank you.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 16:19

Thank you. Next is Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 16:25

Thank you chair. I turned in my parking pass. And I have seen many people who do have a parking pass parked next to me where I park without a parking pass. So, I'm curious as to why the parking pass is necessary for those council members. To the point that Aldersperson Van Zeeland brought up, it seems like small nickels, dimes, but shouldn't we save \$1,000 in ten places so that we can do something more for the city and the citizens? Shouldn't we save \$1,000 in a hundred places so that we can do something for the citizens of this city? I think even though it seems small and seems nickel and dime, and maybe to some seems perform seems performative, to me, it seems like we're that there's something that is being done. So, I would like to encourage people to sort of think a little further about that rather than looking at the presenter of the amendment and look more at the body of the amendment. Thank you.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 17:38

All right, next is Alder Meltzer.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 17:42

Thank you, I have a question for Attorney Behrens. Wouldn't this be voting on our own salary and benefits if we take up this amendment? I feel that we've had a lot of discussion about the council parking permits over the years, and I feel that the best opportunity to address that is when we come up for when we vote on the salaries staggered a couple of years out. So, I just wanted some clarification there.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 18:15

The parking permits are not part of the salary that's set. Parking permits are a benefit. It's a non-taxable benefit. And I guess maybe to help use an example. In the past, the council has also set up a budget for training that's available for those of you that want to take advantage of those funds. Parking pass is similar to that. I think where maybe some confusion lies goes back to our last meeting, where there was some discussion but no action on that about actually taking those funds and tacking those on to the salary itself. That would be then essentially a salary discussion where you have to take that into consideration. But just making the passes available as a benefit for those who want to exercise that benefit is not part of the salary discussion.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 19:14

Thank you.

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Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 19:19

All right, there is no one left in the queue. So, we will go ahead and vote. Sorry. Oh, sorry. We did just get a couple of people jump in last second year. So, Alder Schultz.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 19:32

Thank you, Chair I also have turned in my parking pass because I don't feel for me in particular, it's necessary, and I think a number of other alder persons have done the same. But I think where we are right now is leaving it up to individuals to decide whether it's important for them or makes their ability to work come to the space and do the job is—I think we leave it in that position and then allow us to have that choice. So, if we elect to give them up, that's one thing, but I think forcing this on the body as a whole kind of takes away from our ability to do our job effectively, in a small way. So, I want to vote us to—er encourage us to vote against this. Thank you.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 20:13

Alder Doran.

Aldersperson Chad Doran (District 15) 20:15

Thank you, I would just remind our colleagues, this isn't taking away something we have this is just replacing it with a different opportunity that still provides for us to be reimbursed for our parking. So, anyone who still wants to take advantage of the benefit can but I think it's at a more effective rate and cost to the taxpayers from that standpoint. And I think that's exactly what we're here for. But since the question was brought up about the administrative staff time to work on reimbursing council members, I guess I would just ask staff if they could clarify or, you know, if they think that the amount of work required to do the administrative work for the for the reimbursement would actually outweigh the cost of reducing the budget by \$6,500.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 21:07

Director Block, do you want that one or Director Ohman?

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 21:14

I can, I can comment. In my opinion, in my opinion with the information I have in front of me, I'm not necessarily prepared to answer that with a hypothetical number of reimbursements. I cannot answer it with confidence right now.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 21:35

So, it's—we know it's a number we just don't know what number because we can't really predict at this point the utilization would be my guess. Is that? We know it would take some amount of time but that is such a wide-open variable I think at this point that it may be hard to tack on. Alright. Thank you. Anything else? All right, I have Alder Meltzer in the queue, excuse me.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 21:58

Thank you. I feel that when we set this money in the budget, that doesn't mean we are spending \$6,480 on parking passes, because people can opt out of their parking passes. I think when we set aside a certain number in the budget, we are making sure that there is enough to accommodate in the case. Let's say something really weird happens this winter, and everybody needs to use their cars to avoid a terrible black ice storm or something. What if our culture changes and things like that? I think that, you know, we don't know what situation newly elected alders are going to be in. If we change this right now, then going forward forever after the benefit of a parking pass for someone who needs it isn't going to be there. So, I think that there's something that's very responsible and very prudent for keeping this amount of money here, and if this money isn't being

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spent internally when someone else, another, when another department needs \$1,000 or \$500, here and there, they handle that administratively. So, there's no loss or harm done to the community or the finance department at all for this money to be budgeted this way, and then alders to opt out of their parking passes. So, I would encourage you to defeat this amendment. Thank you. Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 23:20

Thank you, chair. This amendment to my understanding does exactly what aldersperson Meltzer would like us to do, except with a smaller dollar amount. We can plan for that contingency. We don't need to plan for a full parking pass for this many people. We have enough money. According to this amendment, I believe we're taking \$7,200 and removing \$6,400 of it. That's still a very substantial amount of money that we can plan for those contingencies if that does occur. Thank you,

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 23:54

Alder Meltzer.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 23:58

I think the contingencies are all better planned for the way that it is right now.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 24:06

Okay, now there is no one in the queue. Seeing none then we will go ahead and vote.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 24:18

Okay. All right. That amendment fails on a vote of 2 to 12. Alders Hartzheim and Doran were yeses. The rest were noes.