

Item 23-0950: Approve modification to the parking restrictions in the downtown business area, the southside of the 400 and 500 block of W. College Avenue

Municipal Services Committee

Mon, Aug 07, 2023 4:30PM

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 42:11

All right, our next item is 23-0950 to approve the modification to the parking restrictions in the downtown business area, the south side of the 400 and 500 block of West College Avenue. Do we have a motion?

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 42:28

So, move.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 42:33

Motion to approve, we have a second?

Aldersperson Chad Doran (District 15) 42:36

Second.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 42:37

We have a motion to approve and a second. I know that we have some folks here to speak on this item as well. If you could just approach the podium, state your name and address for the record.

Sal's Pizza Representative 42:54

Hi, my name is [Unclear]. I'm here on behalf of Sal's pizza. My family owns that. Do you want Sal's Pizza address?

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 43:01

That would be fine.

Sal's Pizza Representative 43:02

411 West College Avenue. So, thank you. We are really pleased to see that for the safety of our community, especially our late-night community. I guess my question is, where are the food trucks going to go? Have we decided? Are they going to have specific parking spots or permits?

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 43:25

Who would like to handle that? Director Block?

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 43:32

So, the request right now isn't so much related to food trucks. We have an existing policy and ordinance related to food trucks. It's my understanding these are just parking restrictions on the 400 and 500 block of College Avenue.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 43:50

I don't want to speak out of turn. Does the city attorney happen to know what our what our restrictions were on the food trucks? If I recall, there—we talked about some issues about where those would be parked. But I don't want to speak out of turn.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 44:07

I'm not prepared to answer that.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 44:09

Okay. That's something that we can get to you. I can get that information for you. Do you have any other questions or concerns on the parking specifically?

Sal's Pizza Representative 44:20

No, not for the parking specifically.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 44:22

Okay, great. Is there anybody else who wanted to speak on this item? So, your concerned just to clarify—I should just clarify before so I can get back to you. Are you worried that the parking restrictions will allow for food trucks in that area?

Sal's Pizza Representative 44:42

No, I'm actually happy with the parking restrictions. I guess I thought that it was to remove the all the food vendors on College Avenue because of all the issues that we have. So maybe that's not what I'm here for.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 44:58

Could we speak to how we came about this parking restriction? Could you just give a little bit of background about that? I don't—I'll just let you handle that.

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 45:10

So first of all, Chair, if I may, I could speak to food trucks and within our ordinance. We can follow up on the specifics of the ordinance language, but there is a limit to the number, and there's also a limit to the distance to businesses who serve food or a similar item. So that ordinance would address that.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 45:32

Okay.

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 45:33

In regards to the quest, I might look to my APD colleague to answer that.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 45:39

Do you have a microphone?

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 45:42

I don't.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 45:42

Okay.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 45:42

I could probably talk loud enough if you want me to.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 45:44

No, that's okay. Well, have you—

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 45:45

You need to use the mic for the recorded meeting.

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 45:47

Okay, I'm Lieutenant Gillette with Appleton police. The food truck—I guess I'll kind of give what I know on that. The ordinance does state that they can park basically anywhere there's a parking place downtown, up until 4am. Again, there's restrictions for how close they get to a business whose primary business is to serve food.

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 46:10

Where they're going to go? If this was just to be put in place, and there really was no direction of where to go, they would probably find their way to, I'm guessing, the north, north, or south Walnut Street, north and south State Street, anywhere on the north side of the 500 block of West College Avenue, would be my guess is where they're gonna find themselves.

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 46:31

We generally only have one food truck that finds its way, downtown every weekend. Sometimes there's more depending on events. Obviously, during Mile of Music, there was a lot more. But it's all dictated on how busy the weekend is.

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 46:47

As far as the proposal to change the parking structure, it ultimately comes down to a safety issue. We were seeing a lot of issues with no place for Uber, taxis, Lyfts, things like that to pick up their patrons or even just designated drivers. They tend to park either right in the middle of the street, or the other side of the street, and intoxicated patrons run into traffic. And there's a couple close calls every weekend. That was one of our primary concerns.

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 47:20

Another one was with the food trucks parking on the south side of College Avenue and bar close occurring at the same time, it becomes very congested, and responding to disturbances or near disturbances partially caused by the congestion—just people running into each other. We thought it would be safer to move all of those vehicles out of there so that, one, there's a safe place for people to be picked up from after bar close. Two it allows the police to not only see disturbances that are about to occur or are occurring. And it gives us a place as well to respond to the disturbances. So, we can actually get our cars there, and then we're not in the ones in the middle of traffic, causing the problems even though obviously, we'll have our red and blue lights on.

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 48:06

So, it just generally came down to a safety concern that was multifaceted, that there were a number of issues that compiled on one another that caused us to rethink the parking structure. And then it going down to one lane each direction with a turn lane really became an issue as far as where are these cars going to stop because they just—you can tell them all you want. We've stopped and talked to hundreds of Ubers and Lyfts that were stopping to pick up their patrons that they can't stop in the middle of traffic. They have a few choice words for us sometimes, because it's their business and I get it. So, I want to give them a spot to actually conduct their business in a safer manner.

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 48:48

So, we kind of looked over what options would we think would work from the lens of the police department. And that seemed to be, given those our busiest areas, Fridays and Saturday nights, in particular just as far as bar

traffic in general, the 400 and 500 block in the south side of street just seemed to make sense as a spot to pick up.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 49:11

Did those comments answer your questions?

Sal's Pizza Representative 49:13

Yes.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 49:14

Great. Okay. Thank you so much. Alder Hartzheim?

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 49:18

Thank you, Chair. I'm interested in what kind of feedback we can receive from the police department regarding the additional memo that we received from Appleton Downtown Incorporated regarding the days of the week for this particular restriction.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 49:34

Are you familiar with the memo that we received?

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 49:36

I'm not but I can guess. As far as the days of the week that would be enforced, quite frankly, none of these these new parking restrictions is going to affect in my opinion anyway or in the police department's opinion, anything but bar district type activity.

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 49:55

And, now generally speaking, our busier nights are, in order, probably Saturday then Friday then Thursday. We do have times that other things are going on. St. Patrick's Day does not always fall on a weekend. That becomes a very crowded day for us. Basically, any other holiday that might fall on—it's, Wednesday nights have been popular in the past. They're not currently as popular as they once were, but it ebbs and flows. Very popular night for college kids returning home for Thanksgiving break would be that Wednesday night before Thanksgiving. They're out quite a bit.

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 50:35

So, our stance would be to just have the—and from a signage standpoint, that's less confusing—to have it just every day of the week. I don't see how it would affect anything negatively to have it every day of the week, because it's—we're asking for a restriction from 11pm to 5am, which affects no restaurant business whatsoever except for Sal's Pizza.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 51:06

Any other questions? Alder Hartzheim? Any aldersperson? Yes. Alder Fenton, which? Okay.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 51:18

Thank you, Chair, I just have—it may seem unrelated, but just refresh us on, if you would, on the 15-minute time limit on the north side in front of the Performing Arts Center. Is that all the time? And Lieutenant Gillette or anybody can answer that.

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 51:39

I believe that's 5pm to 3am. And to be honest, I don't think we've been enforcing that all the greatest, as it's kind of been the spot where people can come and pick up their patrons, sometimes people park there. With the new parking restrictions, I think and the one lane we probably need to enforce better than we have in the past. But again, it's currently sitting 5pm to 3am.

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 52:04

I don't know why that time frame was picked. That was done I think when we remove the taxi pickup only area, it was done at that time. And I think that was the intention was to have something similar to that, thinking that drop off—the drop off time would start at 5pm. I don't know if there's any proposal to change that or leave that the way it is. If we could put new signs up just to be consistent make it to 5am so there's no confusion, but there's no parking on the streets from 2 to 5am anyway, with the exception of the downtown area, just—we kind of let that be for bar patrons to clear out of there. But yeah, 5pm to 3am for that area.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 52:49

Thank you.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 52:51

Any other questions or discussion? Alder Doran?

Alderson Chad Doran (District 15) 52:55

Thank you. Question, I guess for Lieutenant Gillette. If—how does—I guess how does this change help the department with enforcement then of the Ubers and the Lyfts and so forth that are as you said, already stopping in the traffic lane now? Do we assume that you know they're all going to abide by that if the spots all fill up? Are they still going to be stopping in the street? How does that? I guess how does the change really help you guys?

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 53:21

I guess the assumption would be that they're going to abide by that. Generally speaking, and out there—I'm out there every other weekend because I don't work every weekend. There's typically two, maybe five Ubers/Lyfts, I see picking up people at one time ever, and that would open up a significant amount of parking spaces for them to go because it would be completely cleared out with the exception of maybe law enforcement vehicles. The food trucks won't be there and they'll be no more patrons parking there. I think it would help a lot.

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 53:56

And quite frankly, if they have that designated spot, we can't—the response we get is "Where else am I supposed to go?" When we say "You can't stop in traffic." I know it's not an easy answer, "find an open spot" because that might be three blocks away based on the downtown parking area. And patrons who are intoxicated don't want to go wander three blocks away to find their ride. And I don't want them to either because I'd rather have them just—the most convenient way or they might just skip it and decide to drive themselves home, and that's not what we want either.

Lieutenant Gillette (Police) 54:25

I do think that they'd abide by the new rules. There would be some learning that would occur when we this was first set up where we can stop and have that conversation with Ubers and Lyfts. Honestly, there's enough of us on the weekends typically standing on the Avenue so that way we were we can prevent any potential issues or address them quickly. And we usually just walk up to the cars and they roll down the windows and we just have a conversation with them and they're open to that. They've been receptive. I don't disagree with them that there just wasn't a place to go beforehand. So, we're trying to create one for them.

Alderson Chad Doran (District 15) 54:57

Okay, thank you.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 54:59

Thank you. Most cities I've been to have something like this for that specific reason—you know, an actual posted area for pickup, though. So, I am again agreeable to this item. Any other questions or discussion? All right with that we'll vote. All those in favor say aye. Aye. Any opposed? That motion passes four, zero. And again, this will go to Council on the 16th for final approval. Thank you.