

Item 23-1176: Request from Appleton Downtown Inc. for free ramp and meter parking on Small Business Saturday, November 25, 2023

Common Council

Wed, Nov 01, 2023 7:00PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 09:12

All right, we come now to a time of public participation. At each meeting, the Common Council sets aside 30 minutes for members of the public to speak on items that appear on the agenda. We ask that folks keep their comments concise and to the point, limit them to five minutes per person. And we'll take these up in the order in which folks signed up.

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Mayor Jake Woodford 11:01

Alright next, Jennifer Stephany.

Jennifer Stephany (Appleton Downtown Incorporated) 11:10

Good evening, thank you. I'm Jennifer Stephany. I'm the executive director with Appleton downtown Incorporated. And I appreciate the opportunity to share just a couple of additional comments on the topic of our request for free parking for Small Business Saturday. The Small Business Saturday promotion was developed by American Express to incentivize consumers to shop in locally owned small shops. It is really the heart of downtowns across the country and across the world. And this particular promotion is one that we engage in along with many supporters in our community and Appleton Northside Business Association as well. And the request is really about removing an additional barrier. It's a special request. It's one that we put before—we have put before the Council in past years. And this particular request is about exactly that, removing the barriers to bring folks to downtown Appleton to shop on this very special day of Small Business Saturday. And we appreciate the thoughtfulness and discussion that we've had at the committee meeting on this and hope that we can move forward with the support, and I really appreciate the opportunity. Thank you.

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Mayor Jake Woodford 28:18

Alright, we'll take up the next item from municipal services. This is item 23-1176 request from Appleton downtown Inc. for free ramp and meter parking on Small Business Saturday. We have a motion and a second to approve. We'll open the floor for discussion. Alder Hartzheim.

Alderpersion Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 28:42

Thank you, chair. This is a difficult one for me because I see the benefits that this particular offering of the city to the businesses in Downtown Appleton as beneficial to them. But I also see that we have some meter bagging policies etc. in the city that haven't necessarily been followed in this regard for this particular request. And, again, that makes it very difficult for me to discern whether this is a good exception to that rule. I believe that I will vote in favor of this today, but I would like us as a Council and as a city to review how moving forward this sort of request will be taken up because there really wasn't any kind of policy to follow in this regard. So, we in this committee meeting—and I wasn't—I'm not on the committee, but I attended—we were sort of trying to fly by the seat of our pants and do what was best for the city and the businesses in the city. So, I'd like to see that change going forward. Thank you

Mayor Jake Woodford 29:47

Alder Croatt.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 29:50

Thank you, Mayor. I would encourage support of this. It's a great—it's a great thing. I agree with the comments that were made during public participation. I do have a question, however, as to the im—the financial impact to the parking utility. I didn't—I've looked for it, but I didn't find it. I'm sorry. Do we have a figure that is an estimate of the impact of the parking utility by waiving this for a day?

Mayor Jake Woodford 30:15

Director Block?

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 30:18

Thank you, mayor. A typical Saturday in November—I average the last five years—is about \$2,300. 2022 stood out; that average was \$3,800.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 30:30

Okay, so on the high end about less than four grand? I would encourage support of this. It's a great, it's a great thing for the downtown businesses and it encourages people to come down and, and spend money at those businesses that are so vitally important to downtown. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 30:50

Alder Meltzer?

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 30:52

Thank you. I also encourage everyone who support this. I was really excited to support the original version, which would have included free ramp parking as well, and through the discussions that committee, certainly we don't want to end up with people trapped in the ramp with a fee that they weren't expecting at the end of the day. So, I look forward to figuring out how we can come up with a solution to that in order to support our small businesses even bigger in future years of Small Business Saturday. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 31:24

Alder Van Zeeland?

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 31:27

Thank you, Chair. I agree with Alder Hartzheim that we do need to have a policy going forward. But in this situation, based on the robust discussion that we had in committee, I think it's important to allow for this to occur this year. And just to clarify, for those who were unable to view the entire video of the committee, what we did decide on doing is not bagging the meters. And so people can still feel free—if they were unaware that there is free parking, they will still be plugging in the meter. And I think that's a good compromise for now. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 32:11

Alder Firkus.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 32:14

Thank you, Mayor. I'm going to vote to support this mainly—I have a hard time seeing our meter rates really been that big of a determinant to people wanting to shop and our downtown. We have relatively affordable parking. But we do have limits on how long you can park at those meters, and this will lift those limits. So, I'm going to vote in support of this.

Mayor Jake Woodford 32:36

Any further discussion? All right, hearing none, we have a motion and a second to approve. Please cast your votes. Motion passes 15 to zero. The item has been approved.