

Item 24-1616: Approve Hilton Appleton Paper Valley Permanent Occupancy Permit and Sign Permit

Municipal Services Committee

Mon, Jan 06, 2025 4:30PM

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 04:05

And our last action item, 24-1616 approve the Hilton Appleton Paper Valley permanent occupancy permit and sign permit.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 04:15

Move for approval.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 04:16

Second.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 04:17

All right, we have a motion and a second. Any comments from staff on this one?

Director Laura Jungwirth (Public Works) 04:24

Not unless there are any questions.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 04:26

All right. And Alder Schultz, it looks like you have a question. Go ahead.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 04:30

Thank you, Chair. I looked at this—took a peek at the agenda this morning, and I, you know, a couple questions occurred. Number one, it seemed like the direction here was intuitive, hotel being where the hotel is and public parking where it says ramp parking. And so, the question was, what—what's the necessity of this signage? And I'd be curious to know what the hotel's answer was. So, I actually did stop by and talk to staff, and it would seem the problem they're attempting to resolve is that when people visit the hotel, most of them are parking on College Avenue because they're not aware that there's public parking in the ramp next to the hotel. So, I guess I'm looking at this and wondering if some additional thought be given to the solution, because these two signs on this street are not where the issue is. The issue's on College Avenue, and there isn't a proposal to put signage where it might make more sense.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 05:22

And secondly, I just wonder about any confusion that says "public parking" and you have "ramp parking". Is there even a need to have that additional sign? Because it looks like when I review the image of the graphic representation of what they propose to use for signage, it says "Hotel Entrance" for Hilton, and then it just says "Public Parking" with an arrow, which is very similar to the larger "Ramp Parking" with an arrow pointing in the same direction.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 05:50

So, I'm—I understand that what they're trying to resolve and why the signage is being proposed, but I'm just not sure that it's as effective as it could be. So, I don't know if there's a conversation that could be had, or maybe it's just discussion after approving this today with the hotel and saying, let's think about this little bit more. But I

guess if changes are made, I don't have to come back. So that's just my opinion. If I were on committee I'd motion to hold it, but I'm not. So, there you go.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 06:20

Thank you for your input. I do think that there is a level of redundancy with the "ramp parking" and "public parking", but maybe also some clarification is people seeing the "ramp parking" might not necessarily know that it's public or available to the hotel. They might, you know, wonder if they need a permit or something like that. So, from, from my perspective, I think that it does make sense. It might solve the problem, but I can see from what you're saying that it might not be a complete solution. Did staff want to weigh in on this at all?

Director Laura Jungwirth (Public Works) 06:54

Just wanted to add that we are currently assembling an RFP to go out for our marketing and way finding and strategic planning for our parking ramp utility. So that is one thing I certainly think that we would look to have assessed and incorporated as a part of that that process. And I think it would be greatly beneficial to try and capture travelers through, visitors to the Hilton and downtown on College Avenue, and get them, get them to the ramps. So, I certainly foresee that there, there could be some future consideration made to maybe adjustments to this, or, you know, expanding upon this. But you know, as of right now, it truly is just to get them "public parking here", and then hopefully the signage at the ramp itself can kind of capture that, that it's the ramp.

Director Laura Jungwirth (Public Works) 07:52

So, I mean, we're certainly open to having the conversation with the Hilton if we want to see something different, absolutely, if that's the desire of the committee. But for now, I think it serves the purpose in the interim that we are working on that that way finding and marketing.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 08:07

Go ahead, Alder Schultz.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 08:08

Again, so to me, I think the purpose is to define where to park, and it would seem like those questions arise when you're on College Avenue approaching the hotel, not when you're—because they go into the hotel and they say "Well you got to go down the side street, and you'll see the sign of the parking." So, this this is answering that question after the question's being asked.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 08:27

I almost would have preferred this proposal to be on the College cat-walk where those questions are being asked, and it makes more sense to direct them that way. So, I guess that's why I'm questioning, because it doesn't seem as effective as it could be if they're trying to find a solution to this question about directing people to the ramp. It does—if you get to that street, it does show it, but at that point, you kind of know where it is, because you can see the ramp entrance. So again, sorry, I—these are just observations.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 08:57

Alder Firkus.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 08:58

Thank you, Chair. I I'm glad you mentioned the way-finding projects. That was kind of my thought when I saw this. Is like, well, the way finding project could potentially make this unnecessary or redundant, but at the same time, this could also augment it too. We don't really—I don't think we really are going to know. So, my feeling is

we might as well approve this now and then we can always revisit it later, once we have the feedback from that study.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 09:24

A question. So, if recommendations do come forward that advise some kind of changes or alterations, now that we've approved this, is there a time frame during which they are entitled to keep this particular sign up without having to make any adjustments?

Director Laura Jungwirth (Public Works) 09:50

We could, we could—we could—that's going to say. We could put a condition on it that it that this be reviewed annually. Or, you know—we would have to add a condition to the permit, is what it would come down to.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 10:09

Does the committee feel that that would be necessary?

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 10:17

I'm just trying to think how to best determine that, I guess. And I think maybe this, having that way-finding study and having some sort of like, "Okay, this is what we're going to do," like at that point, it might be easier to determine whether or not—and even the hotel themselves may not feel it necessary to have this in that future state. But it's probably hard for both them and us to really determine that without having gone through the study.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 10:51

Go ahead, Deputy Director Neuberger.

Deputy Director Pete Neuberger (Public Works) 10:53

Just going to float this out there. I'm wondering if the committee would be satisfied with, once the permanent occupancy had been authorized through committee and council, if the if an annual administrative review could be conducted by staff. I'm also anticipating that that study, once complete, will be taken back through this committee as a—at least as an information item, and we can update the committee at that point on this particular question.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 11:27

That would satisfy me. What about the rest of the committee? Attorney, sorry, we didn't distribute mics for everyone.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 11:40

That's okay. I'm not sure what was proposed would be permissible based on the way the permit is set up, because then it's not a permanent occupancy permit if it's subject to review and possible revocation every year. It seems that the route to go with this would be to place a specific condition on this or a condition that the sign may be removed subject to order of the city, subject to a future way-finding or changes like that. That doesn't speak to other signs that are up. Can only deal with the one that's before the committee right now. So either passing this with a condition that direct staff to put some sort of condition to modify or have that sign removed if a way-finding study later determines it's appropriate, might be a way to go, or holding the matter for a period of time to allow staff to work on something (or, I don't know what the timing is for the way-finding study) might be another option, but just having quickly glanced at the permit and the language in the permit, I don't see anything that in here that would indicate the city has the authority unless there's either a safety hazard or a violation of the law that we could then ask that it be removed.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 13:14

Thank you. Director, Jungwirth what is the time frame for that way-finding study?

Deputy Director Pete Neuberger (Public Works) 13:27

So, I would anticipate that the RFP will be issued in January. I'll have a contractor recommendation ready to take before committee in February, and by the end of 2025 I'd anticipate that the work would be, for the most part, completed.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 13:49

Okay. And that then would—the results of that that work would potentially impact a lot of other signs, not just this one, right?

Deputy Director Pete Neuberger (Public Works) 14:00

Yep.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 14:01

So, it's my feeling at this point that if we don't put any conditions on it so that it can just sit in the same boat as all those other signs and experience the outcome of the way-finding study the same way that all the other signs are going to—that makes sense to me, but I'm open to whatever other suggestions the committee has. Alder Firkus.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 14:26

Excuse me. Thank you, Chair. I'm just wondering then if the hotel was aware of us engaging in this way-finding study, if that would change their feelings. I'm guessing they're not aware of this when they made the request, that this is something they just kind of came up with on their own. I'm wondering if that's maybe worthwhile to go back and say, "Hey, if the city is going to engage in this activity, would you want to wait until we do it?" Because then they may not have to put up the sign themselves if our study says, you know, we should put a sign here. Because they could put up a sign. It could be completely different in style of all the others signs that maybe could get put up, and then I think that would be just kind of a weird situation to be in. So, I don't know if maybe that would be worthwhile to say, hey, let's hold this for two weeks. Maybe staff, if you could re-engage or engage with the hotel just to say, run this by them. See if they're still want to go forward with this request. If that's the case, then I guess. If they're like, "Okay, we'll wait," then perfect.

Director Laura Jungwirth (Public Works) 15:25

Yeah, I think we would feel most comfortable either adding a condition of potential future removal, barring any way-finding signage or holding this and letting us have that conversation with them.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 15:35

Thank you. We'll go to Attorney Behrens and then to Alder Schultz.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 15:41

Just to add on to that, if you notice on the sign permit, the estimated cost is \$2,350 so I just caution the committee that granting this permit with no conditions and no additional discussion, I don't know how willing the hotel might be to remove that sign after spending that amount of money just within the last year either.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 16:10

Alder Schultz.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 16:12

Yeah, if I could just get some clarification. So, when we're talking about other signage, I mean, I can see there's like, BMO Harris, and there's a couple other restaurants and whatnot on the other overpass and other places throughout the city that are going to be impacted by this. What's the city's authority to come in at some point and say "We conducted this study. We've determined that we'd like to put way-finding signage in these locations. Your sign is in the way." We've granted permanent occupancy permits for some of these signs. What's the process for us being able to take them down or ask them to be relocated? I guess I'd like to understand, if we're talking about—

Attorney Christopher Behrens 16:51

I think that might be a conversation at a different time. We're getting beyond the scope of this particular permit.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 16:56

Okay, I appreciate that answer. I just feel like there's some questions about its efficacy, and now that we've having this discussion about a way-finding program that's on the books for this year, I guess I'd like to recommend that the committee consider holding it and maybe have a discussion with the hotel.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 17:20

Thank you. Alder Siebers.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 17:22

I like to make a motion that we hold this until our next meeting.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 17:26

Second.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 17:26

All right. We have a motion to hold and a second. Any last comments or questions? Seeing none, let's go ahead and vote. All in favor say aye. Aye. Any opposed or abstaining? There are none. So, four zero. That is held for two weeks until our next meeting.