



SUBJECT: December Free P Parking Program

TO: Community Planning, Regulation & Mobility Cttee.

FROM: Transportation Services Department

Report Number: TS-24-20

Wards Affected: 2

File Numbers: 110-04-01

Date to Committee: October 6, 2020

Date to Council: October 19, 2020

Recommendation:

Approve the amendment to By-law 39-2016, otherwise known as the “Parking and Idling By-law”, to discontinue December free parking in all downtown parking facilities effective December 1st, 2020.

PURPOSE:

Vision to Focus Alignment:

Focus Area 5 – Delivering customer centric services with a focus on efficiency and technology transformation. The downtown business community as our customer, has requested a change in the parking service provided.

Background and Discussion:

The Downtown Parking Committee (DPC) was established on November 11, 2002 as a citizen advisory committee of council. The mandate of the DPC is to:

- To provide comments and advice to Council on strategies and policies that affect the development and delivery of parking services in Downtown Burlington
- To consider the community’s interests regarding parking in Downtown Burlington and assist Council in addressing those concerns.

December Free P!

On June 17, 2013, Council approved report TS-10-13, otherwise known as ‘Changes to on-street and municipal facility parking’, which approved free parking for all on-street meters and in municipal parking facilities in the Defined Parking Area in downtown Burlington for the month of December.

The intention of this initiative was to improve the parking experience and support economic activity, special events, tourism, and visitor activity in the downtown throughout the month of December.

Since that time, the program served its purpose and was well received by the downtown business community. However, over the past several years, the benefit of the program has been challenged and in December 2019, the DPC was informed that the consensus among the Burlington Downtown Business Association (BDDBA) membership was that the program is no longer achieving the original goal, and additionally, that the reduced turnover in parking spaces observed during the Free P period has in fact, become detrimental to business activity.

The DPC agreed on a motion to pause the December Free P! initiative to allow the committee to review options to revise the program. The BDDBA circulated a survey to all membership, requesting their feedback and personal experience on the program. The survey consisted of three options:

1. Cancel the program
2. Modify the program
3. Status Quo

As a result of the response, the Burlington Downtown Parking Advisory Committee held a special meeting on March 3, 2020 where the findings of the survey were presented. While modifications to the program were considered at length, consensus was reached that given the current parking occupancy levels in the downtown, both visitors and businesses would benefit more from the turnover of parking spaces that paid parking would encourage. The recommendation from the Burlington Downtown Parking Advisory Committee (Appendix A) is that the Free P Parking Program be discontinued.

City of Burlington Transportation Services staff serve in a support capacity to the DPC. Staff consider the DPC and BDDBA as the voice of the downtown business community and will support the decision to discontinue the December Free P! parking program.

Strategy/process

The DPC and DBDA represent the interests of Burlington downtown businesses to council. Both committees have indicated that according to their membership, the

December Free P is no longer fulfilling its intended purpose and moreover has lowered turnover rates which is considered detrimental to business activity.

Options Considered

Options considered and presented to downtown businesses were to maintain the program status quo, make modifications and to discontinue the program. Based on the responses from the business community, there is strong support to discontinue the Free P program.

Financial Matters:

The downtown municipal parking service functions with a net zero annual operating budget. Net revenues in excess of expenses are allocated to the Downtown Parking Reserve Fund. Should expenses exceed revenues, funds are withdrawn from the reserve fund to ensure that the downtown parking service continues to be self-sufficient.

When the Free P program was implemented the annual cost of permits was charged over 11 months of the year and each permit holder saw an increase in the monthly fee. With the termination of the Free P program, permits will now once again be collected over 12 months thereby reducing the cost of the monthly permit.

Eliminating the Free P program will bring in additional paid parking revenues, which would contribute to the parking reserve fund.

Total Financial Impact

The annual revenues from parking permits will remain unchanged and therefore staff do not anticipate any negative financial impact in terminating the Free P parking program. Staff anticipate additional revenue as a result of the resumption of paid daily parking during the month of December.

Source of Funding

Not applicable

Other Resource Impacts

Not applicable

Climate Implications

Not applicable

Engagement Matters:

Staff will work with the Communications Department to develop appropriate communication and media releases.

Council's decision on these matters will be communicated to stakeholders and the community through the Downtown Parking Committee membership, a media release, a marketing campaign and the city's website

Conclusion:

The proposed amendment to By-law 39-2016 is supportive of the DPC's recommendation to remove December Free P.

Respectfully submitted,

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Appendices:

- A. Memo from Robert Steven, Chair, Downtown Parking Committee
- B. Parking By-law XX-2020 and Parking and Idling By-law Schedule "1"

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Council.