
CITY OF BIDDEFORD, MAINE

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On Tuesday, October 23, 2018, the City received notice that a citizen had filed a complaint with the York County Superior Court seeking to permanently ban any and all parking programs that would require long-term users of parking in the downtown to pay for parking. Currently, the City's property taxpayers pay for parking expenses through their taxes. The very nature of the relief sought in the complaint, if granted, would ensure that property taxes in the community would be the only source of funding for long-term parking that is being used by many non-residents or for the benefit of non-resident commercial property owners.

The City strongly disagrees with the basic premise that residential property taxes should be used for the benefit of non-property taxpayers. The City also strongly disagrees with plaintiff's interpretation of the 2014 parking meter referendum. The complaint misrepresents the intent and scope of the citizen-initiated referendum that opposed installing parking meters on downtown streets.

The City is pleased that the Court rejected the plaintiff's request that the Court immediately grant a temporary restraining order prohibiting the parking program without notice to the City and without giving the City an opportunity to respond to the complaint.

The City is confident that the Court will agree that a fair, impartial and thorough review of the parking program will show that it is not only consistent with the intent of the voters, but it is also exactly what the voters wanted when the referendum passed.

At the time of the 2014 parking meter referendum, the City was actively discussing installing parking meters on every major street in the downtown. The goal was to raise funds from customers of downtown businesses. By rejecting this plan, citizens demonstrated that they did not want to pay in order to park on City streets and spend money in the downtown businesses. They also did not want to pay for short-term parking on downtown streets to fund the future construction and maintenance of new parking facilities.

The City heard this message very clearly and stopped any discussions regarding installing parking meters on downtown streets. After a great deal of deliberation and citizen comment, it has designed a program that meets the citizens' desires. The parking program:

- Does not charge for on street parking;
- Increases the amount of free short-term, high-turnover on-street parking that is available for patrons of downtown shops and restaurants; and
- Shifts the costs associated with long-term parking needs (including the construction of future off-street parking) away from the City's taxpayers and onto the people and businesses with those needs.

The City is confident that the parking program is consistent with the intent of the referendum and that it will prevail in the pending lawsuit.

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