



## Staff Report

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**File #:** 21-17

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**Item #:** 5.b.

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**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**THROUGH:** Steve Powers, City Manager

**FROM:** Norman Wright, Community Development Director

### **SUBJECT:**

Increasing patron access to the library with new parking policies

Ward(s): All Wards

Councilor(s): All Councilors

Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

Result Area(s): Welcoming and Livable Community

### **ISSUE:**

Shall City Council direct Staff to prepare for Council's consideration a resolution to adopt a Council Policy establishing that parking at the Main Library Parkade be provided at no cost to the public for a certain period of time while retaining the City Manager's authority to establish additional free parking events and future parking fees?

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Direct Staff to prepare for Council's consideration a resolution to adopt a Council Policy establishing that parking at the Main Library Parkade be provided at no cost to the public for a certain period of time while retaining the City Manager's authority to establish additional free parking events and future parking fees?

### **SUMMARY:**

A primary long-term strategic goal of the Salem Public Library is to offer services that are easily accessible to all members of the community. Updating the parking system and fee structure at the Main Library Parkade offers a critical opportunity for achieving this goal. Potential library patrons experience access barriers in both the cost to park and limited payment methods. Adopting Staff's recommended Council Policy Number L-2 "Ninety-Minute Option" (Attachment 1) will reduce these barriers.

The Library Advisory Board and City Council's Library Seismic Retrofit Project Committee recommend

a three-hour option.

With the ongoing Seismic Retrofit Project, the library has an opportunity to replace its existing coin-operated meters with new digital kiosks that allow a variety of payment methods and a finer selection for time limits. A plan to acquire and install the new technology is underway.

## **FACTS AND FINDINGS:**

The current parking system at the Library Parkade has regularly been a source of complaint by patrons and the issue was very prevalent during community discussions in the outreach stage of the Library's Seismic and Safety Upgrade Project ("Seismic Retrofit Project"). A March 2019 summary report established that nearly 88% of the 300+ survey respondents identified free parking as an important feature for increased library use. Key Findings from the report are available at <https://www.cityofsalem.net/Pages/library-improvements-revealed-by-community-outreach-efforts.aspx>.

Research into best practices indicates that financial costs are one of the most common barriers that our patrons face. In recognition of this, the Library Bill of Rights adopted by the American Library Association states the following, "Libraries should examine policies and procedures, particularly those involving fines, fees, or other user charges, and actively move toward eliminating any that may create potential barriers to access or academic achievement."

The 90-minute limit is because many library programs and events are ninety minutes or less. Ninety minutes of free parking also provides time for patrons to enjoy a mix of library services without feeling rushed. Staff's recommendation maintains the current practice of providing free parking every evening after 6pm and all of Sunday.

The 90-minute recommendation has been considered by the Library Advisory Board (LAB) and Council's Seismic Retrofit Subcommittee.

### *LAB recommendation:*

When discussed at its August 12, 2020, meeting, the LAB established an alternative recommendation. The LAB voted for a policy that allows three free hours of parking instead of ninety minutes. The LAB also recommended maintaining free parking daily after 6pm and on Sundays. The LAB sent their recommendation to Council separately via email and it is reflected in the alternative Council Policy Number L-2 "Three-Hour Option" (Attachment 2).

### *Seismic Retrofit Subcommittee Recommendation:*

New meter technology is critical to the effective administration of a parking policy. New meters coincide with the Seismic Retrofit Project. The Council's Seismic Retrofit Subcommittee advises on project enhancements. After being informed of the parking technology, the Subcommittee voted at their November 18, 2020, meeting to support the LAB recommendation of three hours free parking at the Library Parkade.

## **Budget Impact**

The estimated costs of both parking policy options are in the table below. This estimate is derived from the three-year average of annual parking revenue at the Library Parkade of nearly \$72,000 per year. Current year revenue is nonexistent due to the Parkade's closure during the Seismic Retrofit Project. Staff estimates that 20% of average annual revenue will continue to be realized under the ninety-minute free parking recommendation and 10% of average annual revenue will continue to be realized under the three-hour recommendation.

Past Revenue Average	Assumed future revenue at 10% of past average under 3-hour policy	Assumed future revenue at 20% of past average under 90-minute policy	Average Annual Parkade Maintenance Costs
\$71,879	\$7,188	\$14,376	\$9,202

Staff has developed a strategy to address the revenue loss under either scenario by reallocating operating funds within the Library's annual budget. If a new policy is adopted, the funding strategy will be formalized and considered as part of the FY 21/22 Budget. Revenue will be monitored annually with the intent of recouping the funds necessary to offset annual maintenance costs. Parkade maintenance costs are expected to increase over time and fees will be managed accordingly.

The kiosks will be comparable to technology used in downtown Salem. The one-time cost to purchase and install such equipment is estimated at approximately \$12,000 per unit. Staff anticipates that two or three kiosks will be needed. Yearly maintenance fees for the kiosks are unknown at this time and will be accounted for in the Fiscal Year 21/22 budget.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Urban Development's Parking Services division will administer the adopted policy. Library staff will continue to coordinate with Urban Development on enforcement matters and the use of "parking holidays" to promote large Library events. Free parking times and parking fees will be monitored and may be adjusted as part of the City's budgeting process

Sarah Strahl  
City Librarian

## **Attachments:**

1. Council Policy No L-2 Ninety-Minute Option
2. Council Policy No L-2 Three-Hour Option