



## ***Parks & Recreation Committee - Board of Representatives***

Dennis Mahoney, Chair

Raven Matherne, Vice Chair

# **Committee Report**

**Date:** Tuesday, August 31, 2021

**Time:** 7:00 pm

**Place:** This meeting was held remotely

The Parks & Recreation Committee met as indicated above. In attendance were Chair Mahoney, Vice Chair Matherne and Committee Member Reps. de la Cruz, Giordano, and Pavia. Excused were Reps. Pratt and Wallace. Absent were Reps. Policar and Saftic. Also present were Reps. Cottrell, Fedeli, and Zelinsky; Mark McGrath, Director of Operations; Dana Lee, Law Department; Frank Petise, Interim Transportation Bureau Chief; Kevin Murray, Parks & Facilities Manager; Julie Giglio, Mayor's Office; and two members of the public.

Chair Mahoney called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
1. <a href="#">PR30.066</a>	REVIEW; Eliminating Beach Pass Charges for Stamford Residents. 06/09/21 – Submitted by Reps. Zelinsky and Cottrell	<b>Held 5-0-0</b>

Rep. Cottrell and Rep. Zelinsky explained why they put this item on the Agenda.

- Many constituents have complained about having to pay for beach permits.
- The City of Norwalk has never charged residents for beach permits.
- It would be beneficial for residents of Stamford.
- As of 2018 the State of Connecticut does not charge for entrance to State parks to anyone with a car registered in CT. The State incorporates a "Passport to Parks" fee of \$5.00 per year on vehicle registrations.
- This could be an incentive to register your vehicle in Stamford.
- There is revenue with beach permits but it could be worked into the City budget.
- The online process for getting a beach permit is rather complicated.

Chair Mahoney explained there are five parts to this item that should be discussed:

- The Norwalk ordinance.
- Legal aspects of the proposed resolution.
- Technology involved in enforcing and implementing.
- Financial implications to the City.
- The process of implementing the resolution.

There was discussion on this item.

- The resolution seeks to change only the fees for residents with vehicles registered in Stamford. The fee structure would remain the same for other permits.
- A resolution was recently passed granting employees in Stamford the resident rate. Will these people also receive free permits?
- Ms. Giglio explained that as of today \$468,000 worth of beach permits have been sold to Stamford residents. There will probably be another \$30,000 - \$50,000 sold for the remainder of the season. This amounts to 13,666 permits to date.
- There will be implementation costs because of changes to how the process would work.
- This would probably not create an overwhelming parking situation. There might be an initial rush, but it would settle down.
- If incorporated into the car registration fee, residents who do not use the beach or permit parks would be paying for a service they do not use.
- There are costs incurred in running the beaches, such as cleaning and lifeguards.
- Norwalk ordinance does not limit free access to residents with a vehicle registered locally. It includes any resident who owns or rents property in Norwalk. There is also an accommodation for Norwalk residents who drive company cars registered out of town.
- Norwalk takes all license plates from the tax files and uploads them and these all become beach permits.
- There are approximately 93,000 vehicles registered in Stamford.
- Given the time for implementation required, it needs to be decided if this would begin in 2022 or 2023.
- In order to eliminate parking attendants, other technologies would be required for paying at the entrance, such as pay stations. Contracts for attendants is about \$40,000 usually, last year it was \$50,000 due to increasing attendants for COVID. The contract is year to year.
- Should we make other resources free, such golf courses and the skating rink?
- Public parks are a public resource and residents should not have to pay to enjoy. There are many resources that residents pay for in their taxes yet do not use. These resources are useful to the community as a whole.
- Stamford is working on a no touchpoint process of getting your permit, the process was delayed due to COVID. Ultimately a resident should be able to input their vehicle registration information online and it will come up right away. No downloading of documents for approval will be required.
- Enforcement needs to be tightened up at some of the entrances. The enforcement is inconsistent among the different parks and beaches.
- Approximately \$70,000 of tickets for Stamford residents was written this season so far. All tickets, including out of town visitors, totals approximately \$200,000.
- There are six beaches and parks that require permit parking: Cove Island, Cummings Park, West Beach, Dorothy Heroy Park, John Boccuzzi Park at Southfield, and Riverbank Park. Mr. Murray will confirm this.

Mr. Lee explained the legalities of the resolution:

- Resolutions are created instead of ordinances because they are able to be changed over the course of time as needs change. Ordinances are much more difficult to change. A resolution is the appropriate action for this fee change.
- The Charter gives the BOR the authority to set fees.
- There is always the potential problem of equal protection – whether the City can treat non-residents differently than residents. As long as there is a rational basis to do so, the City has the constitutional permission to make this change.

Ms. Giglio will submit to the Committee an analysis of the past three years of Stamford beach permits sold. This will include ticket revenue. She will also provide the exact number of vehicles registered in Stamford, breaking out commercial and non-commercial. Norwalk does not grant free permits to residents with commercially registered vehicles.

Chair Mahoney stated that Rep. Cottrell and Rep. Zelinsky will continue to work on this resolution, and the Committee will await the requested documents from Ms. Giglio.

A motion to hold item PR30.066 was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 5-0-0 (Reps. Mahoney, de la Cruz, Giordano, Matherne, and Pavia in favor).

Chair Mahoney adjourned the meeting at 8:29pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dennis Mahoney, Chair

This meeting is on [video](#)