

Work Session
Mayor and Council
June 23, 2011

A Work Session of the Mayor and Council was called to order at 7:40 p.m. by Mayor Barra who announced that the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act were met by the required posting and notice to publications.

The following individuals answered roll call: Council members Bernstein, LaMonica, Schoepflin, White, Wilczynski and Barra. Mrs. McCarthy and Mr. Bole were also present.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Barra stated that significant bills have been passed in the legislature dealing with pensions and health care which will have an enormous impact on employees, residents and tax payers. He commented that all information has not been received in terms of contributions by employees. Employees will be asked to contribute a percentage of the healthcare coverage that they are receiving, but in no case will they contribute less than 1.5% of their salary. Police pension contributions will increase from 8.5% to 10% and the PERS contributions will increase from 5% to 6.5%. The Borough's contribution to the pension system will remain the same.

Commuter Parking

A meeting was recently held regarding commuter parking by the train station. The following individuals were in attendance: Mr. Bernstein from the Public Safety Committee, Mrs. White from Facilities and DPW, Mayor Barra, Police Chief Scherb, Traffic and Safety Officer Sergeant Griffith and Mr. Cauwenberghs, Director of Operations.

Mr. Barra said there was some concern about the proposed change of twenty-two spots from the commuter lot to shopper parking. That concern was based on whether the change would have a detrimental effect on Allendale residents. Both sides of the commuter parking area were reviewed with regard to the number of spots, resident spots, non-resident spots, commuter parking and handicapped parking.

Mr. Barra said he has walked through the parking lot every day and has looked at the tags on the cars as well as the meter spots. He said the eighteen meter spots are in a good location and not utilized very often. The meters have always been considered to be the boundary line between resident and non-resident spaces. It was decided to move the meter spots farther down in the parking lot. Commuter shopping will move into the location currently used for meter parking.

Following the twenty-two new shopper parking spaces there will be an additional ten Allendale resident parking spaces. After that will be the metered parking and then the non-resident section.

Mr. Barra commented that the new parking that was built by New Jersey Transit is virtually always empty and there are usually sixty to seventy vacant spots at the end of the parking lot.

With the implementation of this plan, Allendale residents will have the benefit of parking closer than they do today. Non-residents will have to walk a greater distance.

There are two handicapped spots on the clock side of the lot and six on the Fire House side of the lot. The ones on the Fire House side are virtually never used. On the clock side one of the handicapped spots is generally used both but both spots are never taken.

Mayor Barra spoke about adding security cameras at Crestwood Lake and downtown. He said there is a plan underway to add a camera in the commuter parking lot, one downtown and one at Crestwood. This plan will be implemented in the very near future. New Jersey Transit does not have cameras at those locations but they do patrol the lots.

Mrs. Wilczynski stated that the meters are generally the dividing area between the resident and non-resident parking areas. She asked if the meters could be put all the way to the end of the lot since they are hardly ever used and that would move the non-resident parking closer to the train.

The Mayor asked Sgt. Griffith and Chief Scherb if they wished to comment on the parking issue.

Sgt. Griffith said the plan where all the parking spots shifts is the best plan for the residents.

Sgt. Griffith said in the past the parking permits weren't pro-rated and so people would use the metered spots instead of getting a year's parking permit when they had less than a year in which to use the permit. Now that the permits are pro-rated, the meters are seldom ever used.

There was discussion about the lighting at the parking lot. Sgt. Griffith said the lighting is not inadequate in the non-resident portion of the lot but it is superior in the resident section.

Chief Scherb added that the Police Department would be happy to be contacted when a passenger who is concerned about their safety comes into town late at night.

The meeting was opened to the public for comments.

Scott Monard of 43 Homewood Avenue. Mr. Monard said his wife who spoke at a previous Council meeting will be very appreciative of how the Council has altered the plans for the New Jersey Transit parking lot. The decision was well thought out. He asked how far down the meters will be moved.

Mayor Barra responded they will be moved thirty-two spaces down.

Mr. Monard said he spoke to the town planner at Glen Ridge who made the resident only spots valid from 7 to 11 a.m. and after that time they can be used by anyone.

Mr. Barra said there would be a problem with enforcement.

Mr. Warren Kaufman of 89 Greenway said he is distressed that this item came back onto the agenda. He said there are already parking places available for shoppers by the hotel. Those were

originally train spots. He added that the row of parking spots by Allendale Eats were also originally commuter spots.

Mr. Kaufman said the twenty-two spots being discussed today are a serious matter and will be a major inconvenience to those individuals who commute every day. If the twenty-two spots are taken away, the extra distance will require him to use one of the two handicapped parking spots. He doesn't usually use one of the two spots because there are other regular spaces available. Mr. Warren said there are no parking spots available after 8:00 a.m.

Mrs. White said she walked in the lot at 8:05 a.m. and there were eight empty spots.

Mr. Kaufman if the twenty-two spots are taken it will greatly inconvenience twenty-two residents of Allendale.

Mr. Barra said those twenty-two residents will park where the meters are now located. He also asked Mr. Kaufman if he has been in town during between 12 and 2:30 p.m. to use shopper parking.

Mr. Kaufman said those people could use the end of the commuter lot or the metered parking.

Mr. Kaufman said the Council is making things more difficult for residents in rain, snow and at night.

Maria Djuric of 580 Brookside Avenue said she is a commuter too and she is happy with the decision of the Council. She is always in a rush to get to other activities when she gets home. She will be pleased to have access to meter parking.

Mrs. White said she believes this issue should be evaluated every year when it is time for train permits to be renewed.

Mr. Bernstein said the final product involved compromise and considered everyone's interests. It is a reasonable way to resolve the situation.

Mr. Barra recommended putting this ordinance on the agenda for introduction at the next Council meeting.

He then invited members of the public to e-mail him concerning this or any other issue. He said the Council takes the concerns of the public to heart and in this case came up with a better plan following suggestions made by the citizens.

The Council voted unanimously to adjourn to the Regular Session at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gwen McCarthy
Municipal Clerk