

August 9, 2019

Michael Stankovich  
Director of Public Works  
500 Primrose Street  
Haverhill, MA 01830-2660

**SUBJECT:** Business request for two 30-minute parking spaces on Locke Street  
City Council referral to the Traffic & Safety Committee

Dear Mike:

I have reviewed the request by the Gallery Barbershop at 109 Essex Street (corner of Essex Street and Locke Street) to install two (2) 30-minute parking spaces on Locke Street. The owner's reported concern is:

1. There is a general lack of on-street parking available to his patrons on both Essex Street and Locke Street.
2. His patrons have received tickets for parking on Essex Street where there is 2-hour regulated parking during his business hours that is sometimes free and sometimes metered.

As you know, this area has been reviewed in the past and recommendations offered. However, to ensure that conditions have not changed significantly, we offer the following information.

**Hours of Operations/Parking Regulations**

The barbershop's hours of operation and the abutting street regulations are provided below:

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Barbershop Hours of Operation:	M-Sat	9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.	
	Sun	10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.	
Essex Street Parking Regulations:	M-Fri	8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.	Free/2-hr. limit
	M-Fri	3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Metered/2-hr. limit
	M-Fri	8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.	Free/unrestricted
	Sat-Sun	24 hrs./day	Free/unrestricted
Locke Street Parking Regulations:	M-Sun.	24/7	Free/unrestricted

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A key take away from the table above is that Essex Street time limits and meter fee regulations are uncommon and highly variable. This level of on-street regulatory change is unusual and can be confusing to customers. Customer confusion typically leads to more parking tickets. Virtually all municipalities that end on-street metered parking at 8 p.m. weekdays begin it at 8, 9 or 10 a.m. Haverhill's on-street meters begin at 3 p.m. after the lunchtime peak parking hours, which is unusual. Most communities also typically charge for parking on Saturdays consistent with weekdays. To further confuse things, meter hours in the nearby Essex Street parking lot are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. as opposed to the on-street meter hours of 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.

### **On-Street Parking Availability – Essex Street and Locke Street**

Parking availability on Essex Street and Locke Street near the barbershop is generally poor. Parking occupancy counts conducted in recent years<sup>1</sup> show that during the barbershop's weekday and Saturday hours of operations, Essex Street (2-hr. time limit) exceeds effective capacity (greater than 85% use) during weekday and Saturday peak periods. Availability is somewhat better after the weekday mid-day period when meters go into effect. Locke Street typically exceeds effective capacity weekday mornings prior to residents leaving for work and late afternoon/evenings when they return, as well as on Saturdays throughout the day when they are typically home<sup>2</sup>. During the barbershop's weekday hours of operation, the closer you get to the barbershop on Locke Street, the less available parking there is.

### **Impacts of New 98 Essex Street Redevelopment**

Parking availability on Essex and Locke Street will likely worsen with the opening of the renovated Chen Building at 98 Essex Street in early 2020. The renovated 8-floor building will include 62, 1 & 2-bedroom units and 6,000 square feet of first floor retail. While a contract for 15 monthly passes was secured by the developer for tenants at the adjoining MVRTA parking garage, it is likely that many tenants, visitors and customers will seek available (and usually free) parking on Essex Street as well as Locke Street.

### **Findings and Recommendations**

Recent parking counts confirm the barbershop owner's assertion that there is often a lack of on-street parking availability for his patrons on both Essex Street and Locke Street within a short walking distance of the barbershop. As is often the case with free parking within commercial districts, it is likely that many of these spaces are taken by employees and residents. It is reasonable to expect this situation to worsen with the opening of the newly renovated Chen Building at 98 Essex Street in early 2020.

However, I do not believe that adding a couple of 30-minute parking spaces on Locke Street will adequately address the problem. Very short-term parking spaces like these are typically reserved for areas where there is a high percentage of customer/product drop-off and/or pick-up. Post offices, municipal buildings and areas where there is a concentration of take-out restaurants and coffee shops are examples of such areas. 30-minute spaces are also nearly impossible to adequately enforce since it is cost prohibitive for enforcement officers to "chalk" vehicles there every 30 minutes. Where 30-minute spaces are designated, we are seeing more and more cities install 30-minute meters to improve turnover and curb abuse.

Instead of designating two (2) 30-minute spaces, I would recommend the City consider expanding 2-hr. metered parking onto Locke Street from its intersection with Essex Street for approximately 10 to 12 spaces on either side of the street. Expanding 2-hr. metered parking onto Locke Street will increase turnover and parking availability for barbershop customers as well as customers of nearby businesses and future retail uses in the Chen Building. This condition would be consistent with what the City did on Locust Street from Essex Street just a block away. There, 2-hour metered parking extends down a portion of Locust Street from Essex Street to provide area business with additional 2-hour customer (turnover) parking.

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<sup>1</sup> Review of occupancy counts conducted for City by John Burke in 2017 and 2014 and by Nelson-Nygaard in 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Review of occupancy counts conducted for City by John Burke on Thursday, 5/18/17 and Saturday, 5/20/17.

A more permanent solution that would result in fewer parking tickets being issued would be to:

- expand on-street meter hours weekdays and Saturdays to 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.;
- modify the paid parking hours in the surface lots to 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and
- increase the meter rate from \$0.50/hour to \$1.00/hour.

The recommendations to increase the hourly rate and create consistent on- and off-street meter hours was recommended in the *2012 Haverhill Parking Study, Nelson-Nygaard*, the *2016 Haverhill Parking Program Review* and *2018 Parking Program Update* – both conducted by my firm.