



TOWN OF OCCOQUAN

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Timed Parking Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) March 2024

1. What is the catalyst for a timed-parking program?

For more than two decades business owners, residents, and visitors have expressed frustration with the parking situation in Occoquan's historic and business districts and urged the Town government to take action to remedy the situation. While some of these complaints could be partially addressed with the construction of additional parking (e.g. a public parking garage), many of the complaints concern non-resident vehicles being unnecessarily parked all day or longer-term on the street in front of businesses and residences. These include vehicles that belong to non-resident commuters.

In November 2017 the Town received the results of a parking study it had commissioned. The study did not recommend that timed-parking be implemented at that time. It did indicate, however, that timed-parking "could be a consideration in the future based on customer/employee behaviors, particularly along dense commercial streets or near the Post Office to enhance turnover for customers."¹ Since that time frustration about parking has continued largely unabated. Soon after the receipt of the study the Occoquan Planning Commission began analyzing the report and studying the changing commercial, residential, and traffic patterns in Town. After more than two years of work, the Planning Commission recommended a time-parking program as part of a larger parking management initiative.

2. What is the plan for educating the community about the proposal?

All the discussions of the Planning Commission and Town Council regarding a timed-parking program were held in open session. The Town reviewed the details of the proposal with members of the community. The Town has been and will continue to disseminate information through the usual channels (e.g. hard-copy newsletters and email communications). This set of FAQ is part of that outreach.

¹ JMT, "Town of Occoquan, Virginia Parking Study," Nov. 2017, p. 17.

3. *When would a timed-parking program go into effect?*

The start date of the program was March 1, 2021. For the first several weeks warnings were issued to violators and any bugs in the system were addressed. Full implementation was started in April 2021. The Town concentrated on educating the public about the proposed program, working through a variety of details, and adjusting the proposed program as necessary.

4. *What are the basic parameters of the proposed timed-parking program?*

The program establishes de facto parking zones in the historic and business district. During the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. vehicles can park in these zones only for a limited time. Outside of those hours parking is not restricted.

Most of the public parking lots in Town are designated as 8-hour zones. Most street parking in the historic and business district are designated as 4-hour zones. There are limited number of 20-minute spaces designed for those who are making quick pickups.

5. *How would the time limits be enforced?*

Town police will be using what is essentially an electronic-chalking software system to monitor compliance. Those who exceed the time limitations would be fined.

6. *Why 8-hour limits in lots?*

The designation of 8-hour lots is to accommodate those who need to or plan to be in Town most of a particular day (e.g. business owners and employees, longer-term customers, etc.). By limiting lot duration to 8-hours the program discourages the use of these lots for long-term parking of additional excess vehicles, whether residential, business, or commuter.

7. *What if I work in Town longer than an 8-hour shift that falls between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.?*

You should park in one of the 8-hour lots. The Town Police have flexibility in enforcement, and as a practical matter in most situations are unlikely to begin recording enforcement information in the 8-hour lots until late morning. If you are in a situation where you work longer than an 8-hour shift that falls between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. please discuss with the Town Police; accommodation of such circumstances will be considered.

8. *Why 4-hour limits on streets?*

The November 2017 parking study showed that almost 80% of the vehicles parked on the street in the subject area did so for 3 hours or less (it was higher than 85% on weekends). Of the remainder, however, more parked in excess of 8+ hours than any other time frame.² After discussions with officials in Middleburg, who have implemented a timed-parking program, the Planning Commission/Town Council concluded that a 3-hour time limit on the streets would adequately meet the needs of the vast majority of customers and visitors, while freeing up additional convenient parking for such users by allocating employees and longer-term visitors to the 8-hour lots. After requests from the community to extend the limit to 4 hours, the Town Council determined that implementing a 4-hour limit (instead of 3) would adequately meet the goals of the program with only a marginal potential impact on its effectiveness.

9. *Can I move from one parking space to another within the same timed parking district and exceed the time limit?*

No. The purposes of the timed parking district program are to increase the availability of on-street parking spaces, reduce the practice of long-term parking and reduce the non-patron use of prime business parking during peak business hours. Therefore, each timed parking zone is a daily maximum. Vehicles cannot be moved from one spot to another within the same timed parking zone to avoid the maximum time limit.

10. *Will there be sufficient parking in the 8-hour lots for those who wish or need to park for longer than 4 hours?*

Information to date indicates that there is more than sufficient parking in the 8-hour lots to accommodate business employees and longer-term visitors, even without the removal of vehicles that will no longer be able to park in the lots for extended, multi-day periods of time.

11. *What if I live in the historic or business district and do not have off-street parking?*

Individuals who live in the historic or business district and do not have off-street parking available to them will be given free unlimited parking permits for all vehicles they own that are decal in Town. Individuals will have to certify on a government form that they do not have off-street parking available to them.

^{2 2} JMT, "Town of Occoquan, Virginia Parking Study," Nov. 2017, p. 11.

12. What if someone is visiting me for a few days and I do not have onsite parking for them?

The Town will make available to Town residents free visitor parking permits valid for up to 72 hours.

13. I run an AirBNB. How will my customers park in Town?

Registered short-term rental (i.e. AirBNB) owners who are up to date on all taxes and fees with the Town will be able to purchase permits for up to 72 hours for their customers.

14. Is it possible for business owners to get permits to park on the street?

A few business owners have asked if this would be possible. Making such exceptions, however, would largely defeat one of the main goals of the program, which is to encourage longer-term parking in the public lots, freeing up street spaces for residents and visitors who are spending a limited amount of time shopping or dining in the historic business district. Permits are not available for businesses or employees.

15. What about snow days, special events, and other circumstances where parking availability is likely to be affected?

The Town will make broad exceptions to the timed parking restrictions in such circumstances and disseminate information on those exceptions through the usual channels.

16. Instead of addressing the parking situation with a timed-parking program, could the Town not simply force people who work in Town to park in the lots instead of on the street?

This is an oft-asked question. The short answer is “no.” Both from a legal and a practical perspective, this is not feasible outside of a more comprehensive timed-parking program like the one under consideration.

17. Why not implement a paid parking program?

A paid parking program was considered. The goal of the parking analysis, however, was not to generate revenue for the Town, but rather to address the parking frustration of businesses, residents, and visitors. Timed parking appears capable of addressing the relevant issues without making it more expensive for people to park in Occoquan.