

## Staff Report

**PARKING METER WAIVERS**

August 13, 2019

**BACKGROUND:**

At the May 14, 2019, City Council Meeting, Council directed staff to place on a future agenda a discussion regarding parking meter waiver policy and to investigate what other communities are doing with respect to this issue.

**CURRENT POLICY AND PRACTICE**

Typically, closure of metered parking spaces requires the user to reimburse the City for lost parking meter revenue. It is important to note that the Parking Fund receives revenues from two primary sources: 1) Parking fees, collected mainly at the meters, and 2) citations for illegal and overtime parking. When an event is held that prevents the payment of fees into the meters, the costs to maintain the meter system still exists. Therefore, event organizers are typically asked to reimburse the fund for the lost revenue so the parking system can be maintained.

The City Council receives formal written requests for parking meter fee waiver when a special event comes before the City Council for approval. The Council may or may not grant a waiver depending on the circumstances of the event. **City staff has historically recommended approval of parking waivers if the Council has approved waiving fees in the past to the same extent for the same event. City staff generally does not recommend waiving parking fees for a for-profit event. The vast majority of requests and the largest dollar amount of waivers granted have come from organizations that hold district-wide events (Ames Main Street and Campustown Action Association).**

The Municipal Code empowers the City Council to suspend parking regulations in two separate locations:

- 1) *Section 18.24 empowers the City Council to suspend parking restrictions or regulations for the purpose of accommodating the parking needs associated with a special public or private event or occurrence for a period not to exceed 72 hours*
- 2) *Section 18.32 empowers the City Council to grant specific exceptions to parking regulations for a period not to exceed 30 days to encourage or accommodate an event or activity that is reasonably deemed by the Council to be a significant contribution to the economic or cultural enhancement of the community of Ames; provided, however, that the Council may stipulate, for any such special exception,*

*such conditions and terms as it reasonably deems necessary to mitigate or prevent financial cost or loss to the City, and to protect the public welfare, safety and convenience.*

A summary of the number of waivers the City Council has granted from Calendar Year 2016 to Calendar Year 2019, along with the estimated number of meter hours suspended and the corresponding amount lost to the Parking Fund, is contained in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

<b>Date</b>	<b># Of Events Requesting Parking Meter Fee Waiver</b>	<b># Of Total Events held by Ames Main Street or Campustown Action</b>	<b># Of Parking Meter Fee Waiver Granted</b>	<b>Total Meter-Hours Suspended</b>	<b>Estimated Loss to the Parking Fund</b>
Calendar Year 2016 <sup>1</sup>	14	10	14	65,598	\$ 13,256.00
Calendar Year 2017 <sup>2</sup>	15	9	15	79,325	\$ 15,937.70
Calendar Year 2018 <sup>3</sup>	18	12	18	46,254	\$ 9,419.10
Calendar Year 2019 <sup>4</sup> (January – July)	9	7	9*	40,857	\$ 12,005.00

1 January Dollar Days was not held in 2016. Assuming all the meters were fed, the City saved \$3,223 in 2016 in comparison to 2017.

2 Some events had expanded or had reduced their days, hours, and/or event location. Farmers' market, for example, extended its days of operation from 24 days in 2016 to 26 days in 2017.

3 AMS requested that only one day be waived for Snow Magic in 2018. In previous years, they had requested a waiver for 7 days. The City saved \$7,813 (assuming all the meters were fed) in 2018 in comparison to 2017.

4 Except for two events, beginning in January 2019, the amount lost to the parking fund has been calculated under the new rate (50 cents/ hour) assuming 50% of the meters were fed. It should be noted that City staff anticipates 9 events totaling \$2,953.50 of additional lost meter revenue (if approved) during the remainder of this calendar year.

\* This includes the request from Ames Pride for Pridefest. Although it is indicated the request was granted, the City Council reduced the number of meters to be waived from 613, as requested by the organizers, to 75.

It should be noted that a request from Iowa Workforce Development was received in the September 11, 2018 Council packets to waive fees for 100 meters adjacent to the Library for an employment event. The City Council did not refer the item for further consideration. This request is not included in the table above.

The figures in Table 1 do not include events where the organizers elected not to request a waiver of parking fees. The special events application intentionally does not include space for a request of waivers for parking, electric, or permitting fees. Instead, City staff directs organizers that, if they wish to request a waiver, they should draft a letter to the City Council, which is included with the application materials.

In FY 2017/18, the Parking Operations Fund showed total revenues of \$833,974. Using the calendar year data, City staff estimates an average amount of lost parking meter revenue during that period to be \$12,871 per year, which is approximately 1.5% of total Fund revenues.

## **POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN OTHER COMMUNITIES**

City staff contacted fourteen other communities (10 in Iowa, 4 in other states) to learn about their policies and practices regarding waiving parking meter fees. A summary of the responses received is below (Table 2).

**Table 2**

<b>Cities</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Council Bluffs	Under the Municipal Code, fees may be waived by the Mayor or by resolution of the City Council if it is determined to be in the best interests of the City of Council Bluffs.
Cedar Falls	Cedar Falls does not have a written policy. The City Council occasionally waives parking meter fees for different events in the Downtown.
Des Moines	As of June 3, 2019, the City of Des Moines has put in place a policy for a reduced amount for special events. Special events will be charged \$4/meter/day Monday - Friday, \$25 special parking permit application, and \$2 meter hooding fee if the event is on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday. The difference is the meter rate; all other special parking permits are charged application & hooding fee and the applicable meter rate (varies \$0.25 to \$1.25/hr) x 12 hours for each day Monday – Saturday.
Dubuque	The City Council has never waived fees or discounted them for special events.
Iowa City	The Council does not waive parking meter fees for special events.
Sioux City	For parking closures less than eight days, event organizers are required to purchase no parking signs (which are \$10 per sign per meter).  For parking closures of eight days or more, the City will bag the meters for \$6 per day per parking meter.
Davenport	No longer have parking meters on downtown streets. In the past, as it is currently, it was handled on a case-by-case basis.

West Des Moines	No parking meters
Urbandale	No parking meters
Waterloo	Parking services are contracted out (ParkWaterloo). Occasionally receive requests to waive fees, but most organizers are willing to pay the fee. Offers meter hood rentals
Cedar Rapids	Parking services are contracted out (ParkCedarRapids). Rarely if ever waive fees for special events. Only waived fees for meter hooding or placarding in the downtown area for street construction projects or other projects initiated by the City of Cedar Rapids. All other events / activities must pay to have meters either hooded or placarded. Generally hood meters for construction projects (\$10 / meter / day) and placard for events such as the famers markets, parades, food trucks (\$2.00 / meter limit 2-4 hours) where meters are limited only for a period throughout the day.
Ann Arbor, MI	The event needs to rent meter bags (\$25 per space per day). If the event meets our Meter Bag Issuing Guidelines and is organized by a non-profit or community group, or has a substantial charitable component, the DDA (Downtown Development Authority) may choose to waive the associated meter bag fees.
Columbia, MO	<p>Currently in the process of reviewing the ordinances related to special events, including parking charges. One of the issues they are going to try to address is how to more consistently handle parking charges when events close a street that has parking meters.</p> <p>There is a section (e) of the current ordinance that allows for waiver of the fees, but it is somewhat vague:</p> <p>(e)"The city manager shall have the authority to issue parking hoods to not-for-profit organizations, without charge, when the city manager determines that waiver of the rental fee is in the public interest and that doing so would contribute to the public awareness of, accessibility to, participation in, and support for the artistic, cultural or charitable development in the city and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester."</p>
Corvallis, OR	The City of Corvallis offers Public Right of Way Closure Permits for events. These range from single parking spaces to full street, sidewalk, or traffic lane closures. We do have fees associated with these permits, though they are sometimes waived when the event is sponsored by the City of Corvallis.

## **OPTIONS:**

- 1. Continue to handle requests for meter waivers on a case-by-case basis.**
- 2. Adopt a policy to charge for all parking meters used for special events.**

If this option is selected, the Council should provide clarification to staff whether waivers can be requested from the City Council for other special event fees, such as the cost for Road Race Permits, Vending Licenses, or electricity costs.

- 3. Adopt a policy to charge reduced or no parking fees for special events.**

If the option to charge a reduced rate is selected, Council would need to decide the percentage to reduce the rate by. Council should note that staff's calculation of lost revenue to the Parking Fund for special events assumes the meters will be occupied only 50% of the time. Therefore, if an applicant was charged for meter closures, the charges would already be reduced from the maximum possible revenue loss.

- 4. Charge all applicable fees for special events, but provide additional funding through the Outside Funding Request Process for organizations that wish to reduce their costs to host events.**

Currently, the City is providing revenues for several organizations to host public events, then later reducing their expenses for the same events in the form of parking meter waivers. Charging the full fees for parking meter closures, but providing additional funds for agencies that host events would simply shift City funding from one source to another.