Parking workshop set for Thursday

THE CITY will hold a public workshop on the paid-parking program slated to be tested downtown Thursday, Oct. 23, at 9 a.m. The meeting, which will focus on the high-tech meters that will be installed along Ocean Avenue next month, will take place in the former Coldwater Creek storefront on the ground floor of the Carmel Plaza.

Police Chief Mike Calhoun and a representative from Digital Payment Technologies will talk about the multi-space parking meters and the license-plate technology they utilize to track cars left in paid spots.

The test along the five main blocks of Ocean Avenue was set to begin in mid-October but was delayed to early November, and two "ambassadors" will work daily for the first two months "to assist the public in operating the machines and to answer questions," according to Calhoun.

Tackling downtown parking was one of the goals the city council set for itself for this year, and other changes already made include extending parking enforcement from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. daily, and getting rid of some of the timed spots on Junipero and the paid parking in the north lot at Sunset Center in order to encourage downtown workers to leave their cars outside the city's often congested commercial center.

Paid parking kiosks to arrive on Ocean Avenue

By MARY SCHLEY

THE EXPERIMENT with paid parking on Ocean Avenue is set to begin this month, with cement slabs being poured now and parking kiosks going in the week of Nov. 17, city administrator Doug Schmitz said Nov. 7. The Carmel City Council voted last week to have National Parking & Valet run the pilot parking program and provide "ambassadors" who will instruct the public on how to use the kiosks.

Paid parking is part of the council's effort to free up downtown spaces for shoppers and encourage employees to park outside the core commercial area — and to generate some cash for the city. The 2014/2015 budget allocated $474,000 for the development and implementation of a

PARKING

parking-management plan.

National Parking & Valet has had a contract with the city since Jan. 1, 2005, overseeing the former paid parking in the north lot at Sunset Center and the tour-bus parking on Junipero Street near the Carmel Plaza. According to that contract, the city retains 68.5 percent of the revenue, but the new agreement adopted by the council ups that to 75 percent.

The contract was pulled from the council's consent calendar at the meeting so police Chief Mike Calhoun could provide updated revenue projections for the new Ocean Avenue meters, which will charge for parking on both sides of the city's main street between Junipero and Monte Verde streets. The program calls for five kiosks on each side of the street, covering a total of 90 spaces.

The cost will be $2 per hour, effective from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, with a maximum stay of four hours. The kiosks will accept credit cards, debit cards and coins. Payment can also be made via a smartphone app called Parkmobile. Users will have to enter their license plate numbers and the amount of time they wish to park and, after making payment, they'll receive receipts showing when their paid parking expires. They won't have to display them on their dashboards.

Enforcement officers will carry handheld devices that read license plate numbers and connect to a computer server that will tell them whether a car should be ticketed.

"At the conclusion of the six-month trial program, the city may extend the program on a month-to-month basis," Calhoun said in his report. "The pilot parking ambassador program is for two months, consisting of two employees from National Parking & Valet educating and assisting residents and citizens operating the multi-space parking pay stations."

According to figures provided by Calhoun, the total revenues expected during the six-month period, based on the maximum of $22 daily for 90 parking spots over the course of 181 days, is $304,623.

Of that, National would receive $76,156. Transaction costs would total $45,612, with another $18,900 for the park-

ing ambassadors, and $21,320 for maintenance, consultants, miscellaneous expenses and digital technology, bringing the total net revenues to $142,635.

"National Parking has been a partner with us since 2005, so we're asking them to be a part of our parking pilot program as well," Calhoun told the council.

He also suggested the city might want to waive some of the parking fees for holiday shoppers, and give parking coupons to shop owners to provide for their customers.

"It's a big change for the city, and we're trying to make it as customer-friendly as we can," Calhoun told The Pine Cone before the meeting.

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Metered parking to go live Dec. 1

By MARY SCHLEY

THE 10 paid-parking kiosks installed on Ocean Avenue between Junipero and Monte Verde streets in the core commercial district last weekend are set to go live Monday, Dec. 1, city administrator Doug Schmitz announced Friday. The meters, which are a six-month experiment in the city's efforts to ease parking congestion downtown, will cost $2 per hour between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. daily, and max out after four hours. They can be paid by coins, credit or debit card, or via a cell phone app called Parkmobile.

Schmitz said Carmel Police Chief Mike Calhoun contacted Monta Potter, CEO of the Carmel Chamber of Commerce, "to ascertain whether initiating paid parking at the commencement of the holiday shopping

season might be detrimental to our shopkeepers." She reportedly told him she didn't think it would be bad for downtown businesses, so the program is a go.

To help visitors and locals learn how to use the kiosks — which require entering the vehicle's license plate number but do not necessitate placing a receipt on the dash — National Parking & Valet, the company the city hired to administer the paid-parking program, will provide "parking ambassadors" to answer questions and provide directions.

Carmel P.D. community services officers will enforce the paid parking in the 90 affected spots by using technology that reads license plates to determine if the cars are legally parked and whether they have exceeded their time limits.

According to figures provided by Calhoun to the city council earlier this month, the total revenues expected during the six-month peri-

Hidden under plastic bags along Ocean Avenue are 10 parking kiosks just like this one. Starting Dec. 1, they will be taking people's money.

PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

KIOSKS

From page 1A

od, based on the maximum of $22 daily for 90 parking spots, over the course of 181 days, is $304,623.

Of that, National would receive $76,156. Transaction costs would total $45,612, with another $18,900 for the parking ambassadors, and $21,320 for maintenance, consultants, miscellaneous expenses and digital technology, bringing the total net revenues for the city to $142,635.

The city council made solving the parking problem one of its priorities this year, and the 2014/2015 budget allocated $474,000 for developing and implementing of a parking-management program.

After their installation, the meters elicited various comments from Ocean Avenue workers and city residents.

Some criticized them for being unattractive and out of place in a town with no street addresses or stoplights, while others accepted their installation as a means of encouraging parking turnover and keeping employees from filling valuable spots in the core of the business district.

One longtime downtown shop manager suggested adorning them with twinkly lights in honor of the holidays — or perhaps surrounding them by the red carpets that caused such a stir during Concours Week.

Editorial

Give the kiosks a chance

BEFORE ANYBODY goes jumping to conclusions about how ugly the new parking kiosks are, we'd like to urge a little patience.

Some people hate anything new, especially in a unique place such as Carmel. So if you're against the parking kiosks, maybe that's really what bugs you about them — simply that they weren't there two weeks ago.

Other people don't want to have to pay to park downtown, but so as not to appear selfish, will be tempted to say they're offended by the aesthetics of the kiosks, rather than just admit they don't want to have to pay $2. If you're against the kiosks, could that be why?

Still others will seize this opportunity to criticize a new initiative — any new initiative — by the city council that handled the Jason Stilwell crisis so woefully. So if you don't like the kiosks, maybe it's not because you really object to paid parking per se, or even to the physical appearance of the kiosks, but plan to speak out against them because Jason Burnett et al. decided to put them in. Could that be it?

We think paid parking on Ocean Avenue is a good idea, because it will discourage downtown workers from taking up all the parking that's needed by customers. This is especially so since the city council has provided plenty of new opportunities for the workers to park for free.

We also think that a bit of change is OK even in Carmel which has, after all, been different every year than it was the year before. Some years, the changes have been great — such as throughout the 1920s and 1950s, when lots of homes were built — while in other epochs — such as the present — change has come very slowly. But it has still been there and produced the lovely town we have today. Does anybody really wish Main Street had never been paved?

And this council, for all its faults, is still perfectly capable of good work.

Which leaves just one thing: The kiosks seem intrusive and have a high-tech appearance which can be a bit jarring at first.

However, the shock factor — just as with street lights, cell phone antennas, cable TV amplifiers, smart meters, and many of the other paraphernalia of modern life — fades with time, and pretty soon something that was intrusive recedes into the background and you hardly notice it at all.

Give the kiosks some time, folks. In a few weeks you'll probably forget what all the hubbub was about.

'Ambassadors' hit the streets as paid parking begins

By MARY SCHLEY

AFTER PUBLIC works crews finished installing signs along Ocean Avenue Monday that describe how to use the 10 new kiosks installed along five blocks of Carmel's main street, the plastic bags shrouding the high-tech parking meters were removed Tuesday morning, and two red-coated "parking ambassadors" began strolling along the sidewalks in search of people in need of help operating them. The meters require payment of $2 per hour for up to four hours of parking in any of the 90 spaces along Ocean between Junipero and Monte Verde streets.

The six-month experiment with parking meters will determine if they should become a permanent means of relieving parking congestion in the city's core commercial district, and the program — including the ambassadors helping to acquaint people with the machines — is being administered by National Parking & Valet.

City administrator Doug Schmitz said he had received comments both pro and con since the program began. "Those in support state that spaces along Ocean Avenue have opened up for use by visitors; those opposed do not like pay parking in town, as well as the appearance of the kiosks," he said. The council will receive a report on the parking experiment in March.

PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

'Parking ambassador' Guy Maggin shows Lily Odle of Augustina's how to use one of the new paid-parking kiosks being tested on Ocean Avenue.

Paid parking now starts at 10 a.m.

By MARY SCHLEY

THROUGHOUT DOWNTOWN Carmel, two-hour parking limits begin at 8 a.m. daily. But this week, city officials decided to move the start time to 10 a.m. — though only along Ocean Avenue, which is also the only street where people have to pay. "The change will allow more time for early-morning customers to pick up a cup of coffee or read a paper without paying to park," explained Carmel Police Chief Mike Calhoun. Most retail stores open at 10 a.m. he noted.

The hours during which parking time limits are enforced — 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily — are defined in the Carmel Municipal Code, but Calhoun said reducing the hours doesn't require any action by the city council, as it would if the hours were extended.

The shift to a 10 a.m. start time is only for the duration of the paid-parking test program, which began in December 2014 and will run at least six months. It only involves Ocean Avenue between Junipero and Monte Verde streets.

"All other enforcement times in the city remain the same," he said.

The change followed a meeting last week of about 15 business people who discussed the pilot program, which aims to discourage employees from taking up spaces in the central commercial district, with Calhoun and other city representatives.

"The group was mixed regarding the pilot program — some in favor, some not sure, and some against it," he said. "Many do not like the aesthetic look of the pay stations but commented the program is working, based on space availability on Ocean Avenue."

That's because workers are now parking on downtown side streets in order to avoid paying on Ocean, but when the council embarked on the parking experiment, the idea was to get them to leave their cars in untimed spaces along Junipero and in the north lot at Sunset Center, which formerly had paid parking.

"Many of the residents and business owners do not know that we have available parking for employers and their employees at the north Sunset Center lot, Junipero Avenue and Vista Lobos [at Torres and Third]," Calhoun said. "We are receiving information that the employees/employers who left Ocean Avenue are now parking on the side streets. We will be collecting data to show who is parking at the Sunset Center, and other data regarding the pilot program to report back to the council in March."

More free parking on Ocean Avenue for residents

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CITY'S paid-parking experiment in downtown Carmel continues to evolve, based on input from store owners and the public, and officials are implementing several changes in hopes of addressing some of those concerns. While the current changes won't mollify those who find the parking kiosks ugly — or those who oppose paid parking on principle — they might give shoppers and residents a little more incentive to park on the town's main drag.

"It's working well for our visitors," Mayor Jason Burnett told The Pine Cone this week. "It's not working as well for our residents."

Paid parking was implemented early last December and will remain in place for at least six months. It costs $2 per hour to park on Ocean Avenue in the business district between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. daily, and people can pay at one of 10 kiosks, with a phone call or via the Parkmobile app on their cell phones. The overall intention was to free up some parking on Ocean Avenue and encourage business owners and workers to leave their cars outside the core commercial zone by providing free all-day parking in city lots and along some nearby streets.

The data show the program appears to be achieving that goal, but Burnett, Carmel Police Chief Mike Calhoun and others have been working on ways to address some of the complaints from residents and business owners. As a result, the city is now providing more free parking for locals and offering coupons to shoppers.

Last week, public works crews painted one more green zone per block on Ocean Avenue between Junipero and Monte Verde streets. Those 10 additional 30-minute spots will provide more opportunities for people

After the paid-parking kiosks on Ocean Avenue went live last December, "parking ambassadors" helped people learn how to use them. The city hopes more motorists will use the Parkmobile phone app to pay.

PHOTO/PINE CONE FILE

Editorial

You can have your own opinions, but ...

To PEOPLE who work at newspapers, the details of long-running controversies become as familiar a favorite pair of jeans, and sometimes it's hard for us to remember that, among our readers, there are only a few "experts" on most issues. While many people (especially Pine Cone readers) may have a good grasp of issues such as the water-supply controversy and the debates over paid parking and fires on Carmel Beach, quite a few of our readers have almost no idea what these things are about, and the 500th story we print about one of them may be the first they've heard of it. This phenomenon explains why sometimes we have to take a step back and go over the basics — for example, our editorial last week which used a sandbox analogy to explain what's going on with the desal slant well in Marina.

It also explains why an individual story may seem either too simplistic or too comprehensive — depending on the level of familiarity a particular reader may have with a particular topic. It's a problem we deal with all the time.

A bigger dilemma than trying to make our stories informative to everybody without being either too detailed or too elementary is the difficulty posed by letters to the editor that are impassioned and vehement, but also just plain wrong. We're not in the business of censoring people's opinions — but what if their opinions are based on utterly wrong "facts"? Should we still print the letters?

Some recent examples illustrate this problem nicely. In the last few weeks, we've received several letters to the editor in which the writers strenuously objected to the city's paid-parking experiment.

One letter sarcastically accused the city council of actually believing the paid-parking kiosks would make the city more beautiful, and another accused the council of sacrificing the town's charm just to make a few bucks. The problem is that neither point has anything to do with the city council's decision to give the kiosks a try on Ocean Avenue, and the question of whether they should stay or go.

From the outset — and by "outset," we mean decades ago — the Carmel City Council, not to mention residents and business owners, recognized that there was a problem with employees of downtown businesses taking up all the prime parking on Ocean Avenue and nearby streets, leaving would-be customers of these shops, galleries and restaurants without a place to leave their cars. Anybody who spent a lot of time downtown knew that by 10 a.m. almost every day, all the good parking spots were full of cars, even though hardly anybody was shopping or dining.

The city's first attempt to deal with this problem was to limit parking to two hours — but that just resulted in the employees constantly checking their cars for the meter maids' chalk marks on their tires, and playing musical cars to avoid getting a ticket. Even when the chalk marks gave way to higher-tech parking enforcement, the problem of the every-two-hours shuffle remained.

So then the idea was presented: Maybe charging for parking would be a better way to go? That way, downtown employees would have an immediate financial incentive not to park right in front, making things easier for everybody else.

It was immediately recognized by everybody that instituting paid parking would have some negative impacts. Namely, there would be resentment by some people at having to pay for something they were used to getting for free, that whatever method used to collect the parking fees might be difficult to master, that the machines that collected the fees (whether meters, kiosks or whatever) would be a visual intrusion on the city's charming main street, and that charging for parking might be considered too "big city." The council decided a test was in order to see whether these negatives would outweigh the benefits of paid parking, and that test is what's underway now.

But two things that never came up in any public meeting were (a) that the city should start charging for parking in order to raise money, and (b) that the paid parking kiosks or meters would be pretty. Those are not the reasons paid parking was instituted.

At this point, the parking kiosks on Ocean Avenue have been around for five months. You may love them or hate them, or something in between, but if you're going to have an opinion, it should be grounded in reality. So please start writing us letters that explain why moving employee parking off Ocean Avenue was a good idea or not, and whether the method currently being used should be continued, or abandoned, or how it can be improved. But please don't accuse anybody of being greedy or purposely trying making the town ugly, because doing that just makes you sound ignorant.

Chief: Parking vouchers are not for workers

By MARY SCHLEY

GIVEN THE chance, some people will cheat — a fact Carmel Police Chief Mike Calhoun was reminded of when he discovered that some of the free-parking vouchers he gave to Ocean Avenue businesses for their customers were, in fact, being used by the employees and shop owners.

"It wasn't a shock to me, but it was disappointing," Calhoun said Tuesday.

The coupons are good for two hours of free parking, a value of $4, and are intended to reward customers for shopping downtown and entice them to return. They're part of the paid-parking program the city is testing on Ocean Avenue — a program intended to get downtown employees to park somewhere besides on the city's main street.

Calhoun personally distributed 10 vouchers to each of the roughly 60 businesses on Ocean Avenue.

"They have the opportunity to promote future business by paying for parking for their customers," Calhoun said. "They were from the City of Carmel basically thanking the customers for coming into town."

But some of the coupons weren't being given to customers, Calhoun said. And, because the computerized paid-parking system logs license plate numbers and shows how often any particular car is parked in any particular location on Ocean Avenue, a report Calhoun ran a few weeks ago revealed that one employee used all of her shop's vouchers for herself, parking right in front of the store where she works, and a business owner used three.

When Calhoun approached the first woman, she told him

VOUCHERS

she hadn't understood what the vouchers were for. Later, she showed him she had since downloaded the Parkmobile app and was paying for parking.

"And I said, 'You are still parking in front of the store,'" Calhoun recounted. The shop owner who used three vouchers for herself justified it by saying she was also shopping at other businesses on Ocean Avenue.

"Parkers in town have always found ways to cheat the system," he observed, whether by moving their cars every two hours, rubbing chalk marks off their tires so parking-enforcement officers don't know they've already been there too long, or rolling their cars a few feet to cover the marks.

"There's talk about whether people can self-regulate parking, and they really can't," he said. Therefore, downtown parking needs to be managed in a way that everyone can use it fairly and equally — including store owners giving the vouchers to customers, not to employees.

"In a way, it's like stealing from the city," he said. "The city's paying for this. One coupon is worth $4. So in the one case, that person got $40, and that's not right."

He asked that people be respectful of the program and "park within the limitations, so it frees up parking for other people."

The pilot program, which started in early December 2014, was set to last six months. Calhoun said the city council will probably have a special session to discuss it and hear feedback sometime in late June. The draft 2015/2016 budget city administrator Doug Schmitz distributed to the city council last week anticipates receiving $270,000 in revenues from paid parking during the coming fiscal year.

Thank you for your business from **The City of Carmel-by-the-Sea**

Use Coupon Number Below At Any Pay Station on OCEAN Avenue for **2** hours of FREE Parking

XXXXXX

This coupon is good for one use only.

To encourage shoppers to patronize downtown, the city distributed 10 of these vouchers good for two hours of free parking to each Ocean Avenue business. But some people kept them for themselves.

Paid parking a success, chief will tell workshop Wednesday

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CITY earned $120,003.98 from paid parking from last December to the end of May, and the program is achieving its goals of discouraging downtown workers from taking up spaces, making them available for visitors, according to a presentation Carmel Police Chief Mike Calhoun is set to make at a public workshop on Wednesday.

A breakdown of revenues shows a steady increase in parking money, from $26,114.06 last December, when the program was launched, to $36,748.81 in May. The total gross income for that period was $186,745.15, from which various fees and expenses were subtracted to arrive at the net. The expenses included fees to National Parking & Valet, which is running the program, and the Parkmobile app some people use to pay for their spaces, as well as $18,900 to National for "parking ambassadors" during the first three months to explain to people how to operate the meters.

Data collected by the electronic system indicate that parking-space occupancy during business hours frequently hits the city's goal of 80 percent — and exceeds it on weekends — and that most people are paying for their spaces, rather than risking getting a ticket. Furthermore, the average number of times a space is used during the course of a day has steadily increased, from 3.16 times in December 2014, to 3.82 times in May. Ocean Avenue averaged over 260 visits per day during the six-month period, with more than 300 visits daily in May.

From those data, Calhoun concludes in his presentation, "Ocean Avenue has good and rising turnover," which is increasing as summer approaches. "Healthy turnover benefits local businesses, as each new parker is a potential customer to the local merchants' shops."

Finding the right price

While the number of times a space is used by a different car could be further increased by charging more than the going rate of $2 per hour, he notes, parking must not be priced so high that it drives people away.

Because the program uses license-plate reading technology to enforce paid parking, Calhoun could also state that most of the people using Ocean Avenue spaces only do so once, suggesting they are visitors. According to his data, 84 percent of those who paid to park on Ocean during the last six months only did once, while 12.7 percent of them paid for parking twice, and 2.3 percent paid for it three times. The percentage of more frequent users was negligible. From those percentages, he concludes, "Employees and residents do not use prime tourist spaces."

During the course of the program, a few tweaks have been made, including adding one more 30-minute space to each block. Residents who have parking stickers on their vehicles can park in those spaces for up to two hours without paying. Also, enforcement hours in that area changed from a start time of 8 a.m. to a start time of 10 a.m., allowing drivers

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dropping in for coffee or picking something up at the drug store to do so earlier without having to pay to park.

But one area city officials have said they would like to see improvement is the number of motorists using the Parkmobile app to pay for parking, as opposed to paying by cash or credit card at one of the 10 kiosks located along Ocean.

According to the data Calhoun compiled, 74 Parkmobile transactions were recorded in December 2014, 62 in January, 59 in February, 73 in March, 104 in April and 103 in May. They accounted for $1,652.45 of the total gross paid-parking revenues during those six months.

Your chance to comment

Calhoun will present his data and conclusions to the mayor and city council during the workshop, when people will also have the opportunity to comment on the pilot program. If the city continues to have paid parking downtown, it will generate an estimated $270,000 in revenues during the 2015/2016 fiscal year, according to the budget adopted by the city council this week, with $96,000 of that going to the police department for expenses, and $174,000 of it being used for capital improvements.

The workshop is set for Wednesday, June 24, at 4:30 p.m. in the Carmel Woman's Club on San Carlos Street at Ninth Avenue across from Sunset Center.

Another meeting to be held the following week, Tuesday, June 30, also at the Woman's Club at 4:30 p.m., will include "general discussion about the program" and suggestions from the public regarding next steps.

Paid parking results don't sway vocal opponents

By MARY SCHLEY

A PRESENTATION by Steffen Turoff of Walker Parking Consultants on the effectiveness of the city's pilot paid-parking program didn't change a lot of minds at a workshop in the Carmel Woman's Club Wednesday evening. Business owners, residents — and even a few longtime visitors — took the opportunity to condemn the concept, saying it's bad for business and counter to the town's character.

In April 2014, after decades of discussion about parking congestion downtown and the problem of employees taking up all the spaces that might otherwise be used by shoppers, the city council voted to give paid parking on Ocean Avenue a try, while opening up more spaces on nearby streets to pro-vide free all-day parking for people who work downtown. When that vote was taken, it was greeted with applause in the council chambers.

Free all-day parking in the Sunset north parking lot and along Junipero began July 1, 2014, and paid parking was launched early last December.

Since then, parking-space occupancy during business hours has dropped on Ocean to around 85 percent, meaning one to two spaces are usually available per block, while side streets have become more congested, and the newer all-day parking areas are routinely full. Most of the people paying for parking on Ocean are one-time visitors, according to data collected by the police department.

But most of the people who spoke at Wednesday's meeting just wanted to know when the meters would be removed.

Sheree Smith, owner of Carrigg's of Carmel, said she sent an email to downtown merchants asking for their thoughts on parking. Only two respondents said they want the parking kiosks to stay, she said, and those don't have businesses on Ocean Avenue.

"There were many comments on how much it's hurt our business," she said, adding that whatever revenue the city has

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received from paid parking (just over $120,000 in the first six months), the stores have lost. "These are affluent people who don't want to pay to park, and if they don't find a space, they move on."

Phil Finnerman, who owns Wilke's Estate Jewels on San Carlos, said he's only heard negative comments from clients regarding the parking program.

"One customer came in and told my wife, 'Until they remove the parking meters, I'm not coming back,'" he said. "I don't understand how anyone who has any concern for business can be in favor of this."

Finnerman speculated the high rate of onetime parkers on Ocean happens because people deal with it one time and, as a result, decide not to come back.

Restaurateur Rich Pepe said his businesses haven't been affected by paid parking, but he's noticed the side streets downtown have suffered. "I don't think it was a perfect idea, because it just pushed people to the other streets," he said.

But while many who spoke at the meeting oppose the idea of charging for parking, he said, "I don't think that's the sentiment of every business or every person in town."

Todd Tice, owner of The Club clothing stores on Ocean, said he is part of a group of residents and business owners who have been discussing ways to deal with the park-ing problem — which will also be the subject of another meeting Tuesday, June 30.

"While none of us wanted the parking meters, there is evidence that the meters are working to keep business owners and employees off of Ocean Avenue," he said. "But at what expense?"

While Tice said his business hasn't been negatively impacted by paid parking, his group came up with some suggestions, including increased enforcement and raising the fine for people who wipe off the chalk marks left by parking officers. (Ocean Avenue enforcement uses electronic license-plate reading technology, not chalk, but officers still mark tires in some of the other timed zones in town.)

A man who has visited Carmel with his wife regularly for 51 years said he didn't like he paid parking, either. "We come because t's quaint, it's unique — and we were shocked when we saw the meters," he said.

Connie Ockert, who co-owns Khaki's in Carmel Plaza with her husband, Jim, pointed out that she and Tice both require their workers to park away from the business district. She suggested a "snitch program" where people identify employees and business owners who regularly take up valuable parking spaces downtown.

"We see it all the time," she said. "We walk through the Plaza and give the people dirty looks." She said sharper fines could help further discourage them, too.

Mayor Jason Burnett, who led the meeting, encouraged critics and supporters of the paid parking program to attend the June 30 meeting, when he and the council will be soliciting any and all ideas on how to manage parking. It will begin at 4:30 p.m., also in the Carmel Woman's Club on San Carlos at Ninth, across from Sunset Center.

Parking kiosks on the way out

By KELLY NIX

THE PAID-PARKING kiosks on Ocean Avenue that alleviated parking congestion but were confusing to operate and considered by many to be a visual blight will be removed soon, according to Mayor Jason Burnett, who made the announcement at a parking workshop Tuesday night.

Burnett told a group of more than 50 people at the meeting that next week the city council will vote to "send a letter to the kiosk provider to remove the kiosks," which were installed last November. At the July 7 meeting, the council will also weigh numerous parking options, including enforcement, permits and other ideas.

The announcement came as a surprise to the audience at the meeting, and with the kiosks no longer an issue, there was broad discussion by residents and the council members as to how to better manage downtown parking. A good portion of it focused on business community-parking, and how to get shopkeepers and their employees from taking up spaces that could be used by visitors.

"We have too many parking spaces that are regularly used in the core of town by the business community," said councilman Ken Talmage, who hosted the meeting.

He proposed the idea of issuing parking permit stickers to the business community, allowing store owners and employees to park in dedicated lots so as not to take up visitor parking.

"That way, we can get the business cars out of downtown, they know they're going to park someplace for the full day, and they know there's going to be available parking," he said.

Todd Tice, who owns The Club clothing stores on Ocean, said his employee handbook states that workers should not park in the business district. He also has a three-strike rule

Tina Barfield of Monterey gets ready to pay for parking at a kiosk on Ocean Avenue Thursday. Soon, she won't have to, because the kiosks are about to be removed, Mayor Jason Burnett announced this week.

PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

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regarding workers who move their cars from one spot to another.

"You can do it once, you can do it twice," he said, "and the third time, when you move your car, you can keep moving. It's worked 10 years for us and has never been a problem."

The owner of Cafe Carmel, in the Plaza, said she asks all of her employees to avoid parking in the commercial district and park at the Sunset Center lot instead. But her female workers sometimes close shop as late as 11 p.m., and she said their safety is a concern.

If the city compels business owners and workers to park far away from the downtown area, she suggested the city provide a shuttle to take workers to their cars at night.

'Park wherever they want'

Carmel Chamber of Commerce CEO Monta Potter suggested more employees take the bus to work, while PacRep Theatre executive director Stephen Moorer said people should be encouraged to walk more in town.

While Potter credited shop owners who tell their employees not to park in the commercial district, she said some just won't do it.

"I know many of you do it," she said. "But some people have said right to my face that they should be able to park wherever they want."

There was also discussion about getting private parking spots open for public use — including churches, the middle and high schools, Larson Field near the Mission, even the Monterey Fairgrounds — and having employees shuttled to town. A lot at the Crossroads shopping center was also mentioned.

But Pam Meyer, with Design Works Ltd. at Dolores and Fifth, said the park-and-ride idea won't work for some businesses.

"One of the problems I find with our business is we are coming and going all the time," Meyer said. "So to park at Sunset or over in the Crossroads when I need my car maybe four times a day is not practical. And I know there are other businesses in town where you don't sit in an office for eight hours."

For those visiting Carmel, Burnett suggested offering a shuttle from Monterey airport to downtown.

"If we could offer a shuttle so they didn't have to rent a car, it would be a nice feature for them," he said.

Councilwoman Victoria Beach said she just received a notice from Monterey-Salinas Transit that it will launch a free trolley service from Monterey to Carmel, which would allow visitors to shuttle between the two cities.

How to enforce?

Different means of parking enforcement were also talked about at length.

Talmage said there has been a proposal that the police department issue parking tickets on a sliding scale, meaning the "chronic abusers of parking downtown," he said, might be forced to pay more per each ticket they receive, while a first offender might be given a pass.

"Somebody in town who gets one ticket a year, maybe that ticket is free," he said. "We get other people in town who get four tickets — the fourth ticket isn't free, maybe it's $25, $50, $75 then $100."

It has also been suggested, he said, that the $75 fine for wiping off parking-enforcement chalk from a tire be made considerably higher.

However, Police Chief Mike Calhoun said the department wants to completely move away from chalking tires and use electronic enforcement, including tracking a vehicle's location while it's parked.

"The [police] vehicle drives by, it takes a picture and it maps where your car is," he explained. "And it comes back two hours later and it will show that same picture. And with that picture, it will indicate that the car moved or did not move."

Calhoun said the city might have to change its municipal code so drivers would be forced to move their cars "out of the area" from where they parked, since, technically, drivers who have surpassed the parking limit only have to move ahead one space to avoid getting a ticket.

Parking zones

There was also interest in the idea of creating different parking zones to designate parking districts and the maximum time allowed to park.

The technology would also allow officers to electronically track repeat offenders and, for instance, tow a vehicle if it's been ticketed five times or more.

Burnett said that the city could offer, for instance, two-hour free parking downtown with the option of buying extra time at the visitor center or via a smartphone app.

"If your position is no paid parking, then that type of flexibility may not work for you," he said. "On the other hand, if your belief is that we should be offering free parking everywhere but we might be open to providing the flexibility that someone pay for time in addition to the two hours for free, then maybe that will work."

The council hasn't decided whether to continue the current paid parking requirement until the kiosks are physically removed, which could be several weeks, or to end it right away. An announcement about that will probably be made on Tuesday.

No need to go back to square one

THE PARKING kiosks on Ocean Avenue may be on their way out, but that doesn't mean the city has to start all over again trying to figure out how to manage downtown's very limited supply of parking spaces.

Competition for those spaces has created controversy for decades, and every city council since before the flood has wrestled not only with finding more parking, but with stopping people who work downtown from taking up all the prime spots before shoppers and visitors have a chance.

The paid-parking experiment put in place in December went a long way toward solving the second problem, as downtown workers decided they'd much rather park their cars in free spots a few blocks away than pay to park right out front. Meanwhile, the city has also made important strides toward alleviating the overall parking shortage by various means which have nothing to do with the kiosks.

So if the parking kiosks, whatever their effectiveness, have to go because they're "not Carmel," we think the council should still keep its eye on the city's parking goals, and the ways they can be achieved without threatening the town's charm.

For example, as Mayor Jason Burnett has pointed out, paid parking could still be instituted downtown, using a combination of license-plate tracking and pay-by-smartphone. Visitors who park only once and then go on their way would be exempt, or the first two hours could be free, but the "two-hour shuffle" we remember so well from the chalk-on-the-tires days would remain a thing of the past, since moving your car a block away or across the street would no longer keep you from getting a ticket.

Likewise, incentives could be offered to downtown workers who use Vista Lobos or the north parking lot at Sunset Center. Some of the parking lots in town that are hardly used during the week — such as at churches — could be added to the mix. And so could shuttles connecting downtown Carmel to the mouth of the valley.

Parking congestion is a nettlesome problem in many small towns during tourist season. For most of them, the answer is parking meters. Just because Carmel doesn't want those doesn't mean it has to go back to the bad old days when circling the block until you ran out of gas was the only option.

Council wants parking kiosks gone by Aug. 1

By MARY SCHLEY

THE PAID parking program launched on Ocean Avenue last December may have succeeded in keeping downtown workers from hogging all the best parking spaces, opening them up for shoppers and visitors, but many residents hated how the parking kiosks looked, so the city council voted 4-1 Tuesday to remove them.

The kiosks, which charged $2 per hour to park on the city's main street and allowed cars to remain in the spaces for up to four hours, achieved the intended result of keeping one or two spaces available per block, even during peak hours, according to data collected by a Walker Parking consultant, and they netted $120,000.

Therefore, the program "may have worked technically, but not for the community," Mayor Jason Burnett observed at the July 7 meeting.

The city council voted to have the kiosks removed by Aug. 1, which will also be the end of the $2-per-hour fee, at least for now.

The decision leaves unresolved what has long been acknowledged as a serious problem, and Burnett said, "I hope the council wants to continue to work constructively on parking issues in town."

Police Chief Mike Calhoun, who has gathered a lot of information and ideas from the public over the course of numerous meetings, said the next step should be to increase enforcement of the long-standing time limit on Ocean Avenue, and he asked the council for permission to hire another community services officer and to purchase another parking cart in order to help facilitate that.

"There's a lot of community support for increased enforcement," he said.

Other ideas included using a sliding scale to assess fines for overtime parking, with the first being a warning, followed by fees that escalate for repeat offenders, and creating zones where cars can be parked once for the allotted time but then must be taken outside of the core area.

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Also, visitors should be able to purchase more time to park, via a cellphone app or other means, if they are in the middle of something and don't want to leave when their two hours are up, councilwoman Victoria Beach said.

During the period for public comment, several people focused entirely on the kiosks.

"I appreciate the hard work and dedication to making the right decision," resident Carl Iverson said. "But what we all want to know is what's the drop-dead date, the spoil-by date, when will they be gone, and how will that work?"

But paid parking shouldn't be dismissed out of hand, according to others. Longtime Friar Tuck's owner Greg Cellitti, who has participated in five parking committees over the years, said the groups always ended up with the same conclusion.

"The recommendation has always been paid parking," he said. "We all agree the kiosks are ugly. But the No. 1 complaint from visitors is they want to stay for longer than two hours."

And if the city is going to return to free parking, he suggested hiring more parking patrol officers to get after those who leave their cars longer than the allotted time.

Todd Tice, owner of The Club stores on Ocean, said his customers don't mind paying for parking, and that it's more important that there be spaces available for them to use.

"I think the business community is more 50/50 on meters," he said. "Some people are going to complain all the time, but some people can't get away" to attend meetings and speak their minds.

Council members were unanimous that the parking kiosks would be removed, but they debated the timing. Councilwoman Carrie Theis said they should remain until a new plan is put in place.

"If we remove the kiosks without a solution, they've won," she said, referring to the business owners and workers who will start taking up spaces on Ocean again as soon as the paid parking is gone. "We need to address what the solution is. How are we going to prevent the employers and employees from not parking where they love to park?"

But councilman Ken Talmage wanted the meters removed post haste, regardless of whether any new measures are in place.

Burnett acknowledged the conflict between what works and what the community wants.

"I'm quite convinced that our parking would work better, that our visitor experience would work better," he said. "But I feel the need to represent the community in this particular issue."

The experiment continues

Ultimately, the council decided on a new plan involving both sticks and carrots.

Carrots would include identifying people who frequently park outside the core of town, like in the Vista Lobos lot at Torres and Third, and rewarding them with prizes. Employee cars could be identified with stickers, just as many residents' cars are. More long-term parking should be provided outside the commercial core, and free parking areas should be better identified.

The sticks, meanwhile, would include progressively higher fines throughout the year for habitual offenders, and congested parking areas could be zoned in order to keep people from re-parking in the same area after the first two hours are up. Alternatively, a car would have to be moved a certain distance from the space it had occupied. And employers, including the city, would request or require their workers to leave their cars outside the business district.

For flexibility, the city would allow anyone who wants to stay longer than the allotted two hours by paying via an app or going into a participating business, the visitor center or other locations. The total time could be limited to four hours, as a trial run.

The council also authorized Calhoun to hire another full-time community services officer and purchase another parking cart.

In addition, council members decided to push the idea of a "Car-Free Carmel," which would encourage visitors to town without their vehicles.

Finally, they voted to ask the company that

Kiosks gone, two-hour limit back on Ocean

PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

They weren't spirited away in the middle of the night, but the parking kiosks on Ocean Avenue still disappeared quickly this week, as crews removed them Monday and Tuesday and patched the sidewalks where they stood.

By MARY SCHLEY

THE COMPANY that owns them removed the paid-parking kiosks along Ocean Avenue Monday and Tuesday, and then the city broke up the concrete pads they stood on and patched the holes in the sidewalks, bringing Carmel's paid-parking experiment to an end.

Soon after, the signs instructing motorists how to pay for parking were replaced with their former two-hour-limit signs, bringing the city's experiment with paid parking to an end.

The parking program that began in early December 2014 had motorists paying $2 per hour, for stays of up to four hours, to park on Ocean Avenue between Junipero and Monte Verde streets. The idea was to discourage downtown business owners and their workers from taking up the valuable spaces that would better be used by customers.

While the program accomplished that and earned about $120,000 for the city — and had support from some residents and business owners — others complained the kiosks were ugly, that charging for parking negatively affected their businesses, and that the whole program was counter to the character of Carmel. As a result, the city council decided early this month to remove the parking kiosks and figure out other ways to deal with congestion downtown, including requiring people to move their cars outside the commercial core after being parked for two hours, charging for longer stays, and increasing enforcement.

On Friday, city administrator Doug Schmitz reported some progress was being made on those fronts.

A new parking-enforcement scooter was ordered and should be delivered within the next two months, according to Schmitz, for an estimated $41,000, including equipment.

In order to ensure the parking officers can use license-

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plate-reading technology to enforce parking time limits and other rules, a technician with PCS Mobile will be in town Aug. 3 to install the first of several new LPR systems. The new scooter will be equipped with the system, too, once it arrives.

Finally, he said, Police Chief Mike Calhoun "is coordinating with the City of Pacific Grove as it develops an ordinance to create a tiered parking citation system," which would have repeat offenders slapped with higher fines.

Calhoun is also working with Walker parking consultants to develop downtown parking zones, out of which people will be required to move their cars after being parked for two hours.