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Comments to Alexandria City Council on Docket Item 22-1097 on June 14, 2022

Good evening. I'm Tom Osborne. For the past almost 25 years my husband and I have owned the building at 112 & 114 North Columbus Street, lived there, and operated a business there (Spurgeon Lewis Antiques). Wearing those multiple hats, we can see things from multiple, sometimes-competing perspectives.

In general, we strongly support efforts to move business employees and longer-term customers to off-street parking, freeing up metered spaces for short-term parking. A few years ago, when metered parking fees were increased significantly for that very purpose, we were supportive. And in general, we support the current proposal which has the same objective. But sometimes things don't have the intended result – or have other collateral results. That is what happened with that earlier change, and what I fear may happen with this one.

What happened – and is still happening – is that rather than driving employees and longer-term visitors to parking garages in our neighborhood, it is driving them to free parking spots within the adjacent residential areas. We personally have no possibility of off-street parking at our 1890's building, the nearby parking garages close around 10 pm, so in order to have access to our car 24/7 we must park in the street in a Zone 3 residential permit spot. But then, due to the many non-residents parking in the closest such spots, we have to think twice before using our car during the day. If we do, we usually then have to hunt for parking 2 or 3 blocks away when we get back. This is specifically a problem in the 800 block of Cameron Street – where the near side (south) is supposed to be resident parking, and the farther side (north) is metered. If you were a visitor and had a choice between 2 hours of paid parking at \$3.50, or you could park closer to King Street for 2 hours for free, which would YOU choose? That block is the closest Zone 3 permit parking area to our home. I can't tell you how often it is that every "free" space on the south side of the street is occupied – more than 50% by non-Zone-3 vehicles, while the north side with metered parking spaces is virtually empty.

The problem is exacerbated by limited enforcement. What enforcement there consists mainly of checking at the metered spaces for expired times. Rarely if ever are the Zone 3 "free" spaces checked. I have seen on many occasions a car with Maryland or DC plates – and no "visitor" placard – parked there all day, and sometimes for multiple days. When I have raised the issue with parking enforcement personnel, I have been told they are over-stretched and, by implication, must focus almost entirely on enforcing the paid parking rules.

As I said at the outset, I support the objectives of this proposal. But I have three suggestions to make it more effective:

- 1) I strongly endorse point #2 in the letter from the Traffic and Parking Board. Make enforcement a priority. And include in that priority enforcement of the time limits in the zoned residential parking areas – especially those areas closest to areas with metered parking. Otherwise, you aren't driving anyone to parking garages – you're driving them into residential areas.
- 2) Consider shortening the time allowed for non-resident parking in areas closest to metered spots. For example, if the metered area allows for parking up to 2 hours, make nearby free resident parking available for only 30 minutes to non-residents. I've heard such a system was rejected in the past because of a desire for uniform city-wide standards for residential parking. But uniformity of rules seems to me a specious argument – since there are some 15 or 20 different sets of parking rules at different spots within a 3-block radius of my home!
- 3) Restore the parking adjudication officer, so those who feel they have been improperly ticketed can appeal without having to go to court. Parking officers sometimes make mistakes, fail to see a permit sticker, a paid parking stub might have fallen off the dashboard, etc. If parking fees are increased, and enforcement is enhanced, citizen anger over it can be reduced with a fair and reasonable appeals process.

Thank you for your consideration.