



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 4, 2019

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Introduction and First Reading. Consideration. Passage of an Ordinance to amend Sections 5-8-71 to 5-8-84: Permit Parking Districts.

ISSUE: Should Council modify the Residential Permit Parking (RPP) regulations to: (1) standardize posted parking restrictions, (2) create a process allowing proactive creation of new RPP districts near transit or in areas with documented parking issues and (3) make administrative updates?

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council consider the proposed ordinance on first reading and set it for public hearing and final passage on December 14, 2019.

BACKGROUND: Residential Permit Parking (RPP) districts are outlined in the City Code in Title 5 (Transportation and Environmental Services), Chapter 8 (Parking and Traffic Regulations), and Article F (Permit Parking Districts). Since its creation in the late 1970s, there have been nearly 30 updates to this section of the City Code to address changes, but this process has been the first to comprehensively consider the entire section. The objectives of this update to the residential permit parking program, the “RPP Refresh Project,” were:

1. to better address current residential parking issues,
2. to improve the City’s ability to proactively manage parking, and
3. to be easy to understand, enforce, and administer.

Between October 2018 and May 2019, staff met with a subcommittee of the Traffic and Parking Board (T&PB) and the community at six meetings that were open to the public to identify and issues and discuss opportunities to update the RPP program. Two questionnaires (Attachments 3 and 4) were issued in December 2018 and April 2019 to gather input on RPP topics and issues that were most important to the community and potential solutions for improving the program.

Based on the feedback from the first questionnaire and guidance from council, staff narrowed the focus of this project to posted parking restrictions, permit fees/limits, and process. A summary of challenges and opportunities for each of these topics is provided in Attachment 5. At the meeting in May, the subcommittee reviewed initial staff recommendations, considered public feedback, and provided direction for recommended code amendments.

DISCUSSION: Below is a list of the recommended changes to the program that have been incorporated into the code amendment, which is also summarized in Attachment 6.

Posted Parking Restrictions

- 1) Staff recommends standardizing RPP end time options on most blocks to either 5PM or 11PM, while allowing a 2AM end time on blocks where it is deemed appropriate by the Director of Transportation and Environmental Services. For example, a 2AM end time may be appropriate where land uses within a quarter of a mile of the block which generates activity after 11PM, such as a restaurant. To implement, staff recommends transitioning blocks with 9PM end time to 11PM, unless the residents of the block indicate they would prefer a 5PM end time. Maps highlighting the existing blocks with 9PM end times are provided in Attachment 7. *Addressed in City Code Section 5-8-72(b)(1).*

Permit Limits/Fees

- 1) Staff recommends maintaining the existing permit fee structure (detailed in Attachment 5) at this time. A review of other cities showed that Alexandria permit fees are in line with peers, and community outreach showed little support for fee increases. In order to have an effective impact on parking behavior, the fees would need to be significantly increased to incentivize off-street parking (currently monthly garage rates average between \$75-\$200) over on-street parking. *No relevant City Code amendments.*
- 2) A maximum number of permits per resident is not recommended at this time but staff will continue to monitor the number of households with more than 3 permits. In 2017, less than 2% of households had more than three RPP permits, so limiting permits would have a small impact in regard to on street parking availability. *No relevant City Code amendments.*

Process

- 1) Staff recommends a process for creating new RPP districts near transit or in areas with documented parking issues through the following procedures:
 - a. Ballots would be sent to all addresses within the affected area regarding proposed changes. In order to move forward with the process, more than 50% of the ballots must be returned by a specified date, and more than 60% of respondents must indicate support for the recommendation.
 - b. If ballot requirements are met, proposed changes would be presented at a public hearing for a recommendation from Traffic and Parking Board prior to consideration by City Council.

This process would allow staff to proactively initiate the creation of up to two RPP districts per year in smaller areas or when parking issues are anticipated rather than in reaction to existing parking problems. This will enable parking districts to be created prior to the opening of the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station. *Addressed in City Code Section 5-8-73(b).*

- 2) Staff recommends removing the occupancy survey requirement for RPP signage to be posted on blocks already within an RPP district but maintaining petition requirement to initiate the request. Each block was determined to be appropriate for residential permit parking restrictions when the district was established, so requiring another occupancy survey to add posted signage is redundant. *Addressed in City Code Section 5-8-75.*

Administrative Recommendations

In addition to the policy related recommendations above, staff is proposing several amendments to the Code to make the residential permit parking program easier to understand and administer, make restrictions more consistent, and streamline processes where appropriate. Key changes are summarized below, and a full list is included in Attachment 6.

- 1) Require the same RPP restrictions on both sides of a block, where RPP restrictions exist on both sides.
- 2) Amend language clarifying who is eligible to sign petitions including:
 - a. Reference occupants of the residential properties rather than residents
 - b. Allow homeowners' or condo associations to submit letters from a board or other governing body for communal association property
 - c. Allow a building owner or property manager to sign for multifamily buildings in lieu of getting signatures from residents of more than 50% of units.

- 3) Allow the Traffic and Parking Board to approve the expansion of a RPP district rather than City Council.
- 4) Allow the Director of T&ES to recommend changes to the permit parking district map to the Traffic and Parking Board to remove non-residential properties with no residential uses from existing permit parking boundary line (e.g. removing the power plant site from District 9).

Civic Engagement

Staff invited public participation in this process through numerous avenues. In addition to the six T&PB subcommittee meetings and online questionnaires, eNews and emails to various civic associations were sent to notify residents of the opportunities for comment. The Finance Department notified residents with residential parking permits via email about the RPP Refresh program and included information about the program in their annual mailing to registered vehicle owners.

Staff attended Old Town Civic Association and Potomac Yard Civic Association meetings to discuss the project and solicited feedback at the Market Square Farmer's Market. All meeting materials are provided online on the project website at [alexandriava.gov/ParkingStudies](https://www.alexandriava.gov/ParkingStudies) <<https://www.alexandriava.gov/ParkingStudies>>. An eNews and direct email to residents who attended the subcommittee meetings were sent regarding the hearings on the proposed amendment at the Traffic and Parking Board and City Council.

Staff presented the recommendations to the Traffic and Parking Board at their meetings on September 23, 2019 and October 28, 2019. At the September meeting, many speakers expressed concerns about a proposal to remove the 3-hour restriction option for RPP blocks. The Board deferred action to allow for additional time to ask questions of staff on the impacts of the changes, which is summarized in Attachment 8.

On October 28, the Board considered the recommendations again. Again, the majority of concerns from speakers at the meeting were about the elimination of the 3-hour restriction option. After considering public comment, the Board ultimately voted in favor of the proposed Code amendments except for the recommendation to remove the option for 3-hour restrictions. As a result, removal of the 3-hour option is not being considered with this amendment.

FISCAL IMPACT: If adopted, the cost in labor and equipment to update signage to be compliant with code (i.e. remove the 9PM end time and make signage on both sides of the block consistent) would be approximately \$2,500. Though hard to quantify, there are expected increases in efficiency and savings in staff time from clarification and streamlining of some of the processes, such as not requiring a parking occupancy survey for blocks already in RPP districts that petition for signage and not requiring the City Manager's signature for the Director of T&ES to post signage on blocks that have been recommended for signage by the Traffic and Parking Board.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1: Ordinance Cover Sheet
- Attachment 2: Ordinance
- Attachment 3: December Questionnaire Summary
- Attachment 4: April Questionnaire Summary
- Attachment 5: Issue Summary
- Attachment 6: Recommendation Summary
- Attachment 7: Maps of RPP Blocks with 9PM End Times
- Attachment 8: Traffic and Parking Board Question-Response Memorandum
- Attachment 9: Presentation

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