



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 3, 2021

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 Title 10 Chapter 4: Stopping, Standing and Parking and Title 3 Chapter 2 Article S: Payment, Contest and Enforcement of Parking Citations.

ISSUE: Consideration of an ordinance to limit parking of vehicles over 12,000 pounds (or longer than 30 feet) to two hours in commercial business areas (unless actively loading or unloading) and update the City Code to consolidate and clarify parking violation penalties.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council approve the proposed ordinance on first reading and set it for second reading, public hearing and final passage on March 13, 2021.

BACKGROUND: Over recent years, the City and the Traffic and Parking Board have heard concerns from the community regarding large commercial vehicles, like tractor trailers or dump trucks, parking on commercial streets, such as S. Pickett Street and Wheeler Avenue. Some of the primary concerns about heavy vehicles parking in commercial areas include: blocking sight distance at driveways and intersections, encroaching into bicycle and vehicle travel lanes, limiting visibility of businesses, environmental concerns like inhibiting street sweeping and leaving vehicle fluids on City streets, and large vehicles occupying significant curb space. The City has an existing ordinance that prohibits commercial vehicle parking in residential areas (City Code Section 10-4-6), leaving commercial areas as the main area of concern.

After several parking restriction changes to limit parking of large commercial vehicles on various blocks on a case-by-case basis, the Traffic and Parking Board indicated they would like staff to consider a broader policy to address this issue. Staff reviewed policies from additional Virginia jurisdictions to determine what is legally allowed by the Code of Virginia. A matrix showing a summary of commercial vehicle parking restrictions of peer jurisdictions in Virginia is provided in Attachment 3.

The Traffic and Parking Board considered the proposed ordinance at their public hearing on January 25, 2021. There were no public speakers on this item, and the Board unanimously recommended City Council approval.

DISCUSSION: The curbside is a public asset with competing demands. The City is making an increased effort to efficiently manage the curbside by prioritizing curbside uses in the upcoming Alexandria Mobility Plan. While staff recognizes heavy vehicles are appropriate in commercial areas for the movement of goods, longer-term storage of heavy vehicles is not the most appropriate use of the curb in many areas. Just as the City expects residents to park recreational vehicles or boats on private property or storage areas rather than in the public right-of-way, heavy vehicles should be stored outside of the public right-of-way.

After considering various options to address heavy vehicle parking, staff determined it would be best to address resident concerns of heavy vehicle parking by establishing an ordinance restricting vehicles over 12,000 pounds or longer than 30 feet from parking in commercial areas for more than 2-hours, unless loading or unloading, as is allowed through Code of Virginia §46.2-1222.2. The proposed ordinance includes a definition of Commercial Business Areas to include all streets in commercial and mixed-use zones and streets adjacent to commercial land uses such as retail, restaurant, and daycare in industrial zones. The specific commercial and mixed-use zones that would apply are listed in the proposed ordinance (Attachment 2). The City's Zoning Map (Attachment 4) highlights areas that would be included in this definition.

Additionally, in reviewing the parking violations sections of the code, staff identified an opportunity to clarify and consolidate the parking penalty language, which is also proposed to help address this matter. Currently, parking regulations are covered in (Title 10 Chapter 4) of the Alexandria City Code, but the penalties associated with violating those regulations are listed with the Tax Code in Title 3, which addresses Finance, Taxation, and Procurement. Another change proposed through this ordinance would move the parking penalties to Title 10 and update the language to set a general fine for all parking penalties unless otherwise noted.

Community Engagement

A questionnaire was available from December 3 to December 18, 2020, to gather community feedback on regulating heavy vehicle parking in commercial areas. Staff contacted thirteen businesses in areas where heavy vehicle parking is most prevalent in the City to let them know about the questionnaire, provided a webpage with additional information about proposed Heavy Vehicle restrictions and related meetings. To reach owners of commercial vehicles this ordinance would impact, flyers were posted on S. Pickett Street and Wheeler Avenue, where many commercial vehicles are typically parked with information about how to take the questionnaire. Most respondents (69%) indicated they supported limiting heavy vehicle parking to two hours on commercial streets or in front of commercial uses in Alexandria unless actively loading or unloading. Detailed questionnaire responses are included in Attachment 5.

Implementation

If approved, T&ES staff and Parking Enforcement will work together to create awareness of the new ordinance before beginning to issue citations through measures such as warning notices on vehicles and temporary signage and explaining new regulations in the areas most likely to be impacted.

FISCAL IMPACT: The fiscal impact of the proposed ordinance is minimal. The cost to print notices and temporary signage to provide warnings about upcoming enforcement of the new ordinance would be

approximately \$400. Existing Parking Enforcement Officers would enforce this provision, and no new Officers would be needed. While enforcing the new ordinance may divert enforcement duties from other efforts in the short term, once the ordinance is implemented, it is not expected to be more demanding than the enforcement of similar regulations such as restrictions on commercial vehicles in residential areas or the existing efforts to enforce the 72-hour rule on heavy vehicles parked in commercial areas over long periods of time. While there may be some additional revenue from parking citations, the ordinance is intended to be a parking enforcement and management tool rather than a source of revenue.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Ordinance Cover Sheet

Attachment 2: Ordinance

Attachment 3: Commercial and Heavy Vehicle Restrictions in Peer Jurisdictions Matrix

Attachment 4: Alexandria Zoning Map

Attachment 5: Questionnaire Responses

Attachment 6: Presentation

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