

## CITY COUNCIL REPORT

DATE: February 17, 2021

TO: Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Councilmembers

FROM: Gail Brockman, Acting Parking Manager

CC: Greg, Clifton, City Manager  
Heidi Hansen, Economic Vitality Director  
David McIntire, Community Investment Director  
Trace Ward, CVB Director

SUBJECT: Update on reimplementation of the ParkFlag pay-to-park program

This CCR is to provide an update on the reimplementation of the ParkFlag pay-to-park program, including changes made to the program in February 2020. It also includes our current public outreach plan and offers additional information and talking points when asked by citizens.

### **Background:**

ParkFlag is a City program that was established to manage parking in downtown Flagstaff and the Southside. The program includes a kiosk (metered) parking program, employee permits, resident permits, and time limited parking. Vehicles using the kiosk spaces need to have a permit or pay for parking. Revenues from the program are used to help pay for debt service on the original investment and parking enforcement, and funds are being set aside for a future public parking solution.

### **Pay-to -Park Resumes:**

In March of 2020, the ParkFlag pay-to-park program was suspended in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff continued to provide enforcement of Title 9 violations including Americans with Disabilities Acts (ADA) space violations and other unsafe parking during the suspension. Through the year, ParkFlag conducted regular parking counts, and observed that occupancy returned to the downtown, once again seeing parking as stagnant and unavailable.

ParkFlag presented to the City Council in October 2020 to discuss possible reimplementation strategies. Per Council direction, the decision was made to reimplement the program on March 1, 2021. This decision was intended to support visitation in the downtown during the holiday season and the slowest winter months, as well as hoping the pandemic would lessen in numbers. After looking at the financial impacts, we found that March 1<sup>st</sup> would be the latest timeframe for the program to re-start and still retain the financial capacity to easily re-engage the program and pay the City's debt.

### **Program Changes Review:**

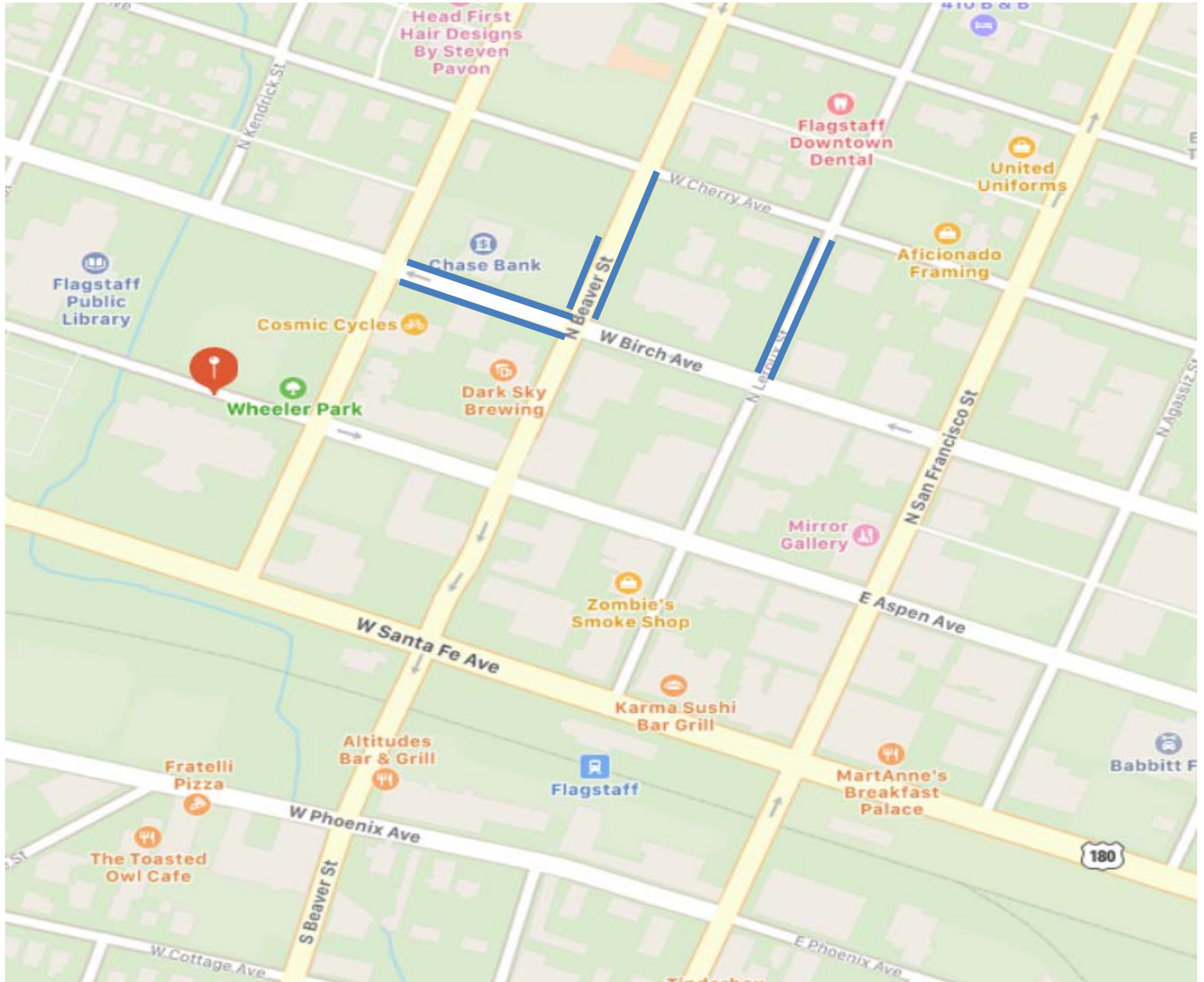
Per the Resolution approved on February 11, 2020 the Employee permits were reduced on March 12, 2020. The rate changed from \$45 per month to \$10 per month.

The geographic area where Employee North Permits are valid was expanded on March 12<sup>th</sup> to include additional portions of Birch Avenue, Leroux Street, and Beaver Street. (see map below)

Expanded Employee Parking Area

Portions of N. Leroux Street, N. Beaver Street, West Birch Avenue

**Additional block faces**



Taking into consideration occupancy counts, requests from the public, stakeholders, and the Downtown Business Alliance, the times parking management is most needed, and the potential impact on the ParkFlag program's long-term fiscal stability, ParkFlag brought several options to change our operating hours to Council in February 2020.

Council's the final decision was to manage parking during the following hours:

- From 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM Sunday through Thursday, and

- From 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM Friday and Saturday

**Current Public Outreach:**

Over the past few weeks, ParkFlag has met internally, as well as with the Downtown Business Alliance, to discuss a public outreach plan to share the details of reimplementation of the pay-to-park program.

ParkFlag, with the assistance of Discover Flagstaff, has created a quarter page ad to be placed in the Arizona Daily Sun. The ad will run on Wednesdays and Sundays from February 21<sup>st</sup> through March 28<sup>th</sup>, reminding the public that pay-to park is again in operation. A half page ad will also be published in the March issue of the Flagstaff Business News (FBN). Both ads will include information about the program and updates that have been made to the program.

**PAID PARKING RESUMES** **MARCH 1, 2021**

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**WHAT HAS CHANGED:**

You asked, we listened. We've made the following enhancements to the parking program.

- ▶ **New Hours / New Signs** – The number of free parking hours have been extended, and paid parking will be managed fewer hours.
  - Sunday thru Thursday 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
  - Friday and Saturday 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM
- ▶ **FREE Curbside Pick-Up Zones**
  - Multiple parking spaces allocated for 20-minute periods to accommodate quick in-and-out business access on north and south sides of the tracks.
- ▶ **Added Employee Parking**
  - 200 N. Leroux St.
  - 100 W. Birch Ave.
  - 200 N. Beaver St.
- ▶ **Employee Permits are now \$10**
- ▶ **Kiosk Care – Daily Disinfecting**

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**WHAT REMAINS THE SAME:**

- ▶ Parking Cost remains \$1.00 an hour
- ▶ Know your LICENSE PLATE NUMBER – keep a photo/note in your phone
- ▶ Touchless options available with the Flowbird App and online at ParkFlag.NuPark.com
- ▶ Cash payment options available at the Flagstaff Visitors Center and 4 (four) cash and credit kiosks downtown
- ▶ Free ECO passes (bus) available for downtown employees
- ▶ Free parking after 5:00 PM and on weekends in city and county lots; free two-hour parking on Route 66

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**BENEFITS:**

- ▶ Manages limited parking for residents and businesses
- ▶ Promotes safe parking practices
- ▶ Sets aside funds for future parking supply

PARKFLAG.ORG – CITY OF FLAGSTAFF – DOWNTOWN BUSINESS ALLIANCE

Our Public Affairs Director, Jessica Drum, is working with ParkFlag on a press release that will include program updates and reimplementation information. It is scheduled to release in advance of the system going live.

In the coming weeks, ParkFlag will continue to work on the following:

- Flyers and posters to be distributed to downtown business owners
- Continued ambassadorship through our Parking Aides to answer questions from the public
- Taking the kiosk hoods off, sanitizing the kiosks, and making sure that all are working properly

**In summary on the reimplementation:**

The ParkFlag staff have worked diligently, during its suspension, implementing the adjustments discussed by Council in February 2020. New hours of operation signs have been installed and all kiosks reflect the change in operating hours. For the first month of reimplementation, the intention is to have a soft start where we will issue mostly warnings while re-educating the public

on how the program works, why we have a paid parking program, and letting downtown employees know of the reduced employee permit price.

**Additional information and talking points:**

**BACKGROUND**

Adequate parking supply is a fundamental need for a vibrant downtown. Downtown has grown into a premier destination, yet our parking supply has not grown to match demand, resulting in a tipping point. Prior to ParkFlag, business owners, employees and visitors frequently expressed frustration at the lack of available parking, inadequate signage and the inability to manage existing on-street parking. Furthermore, unmanaged parking in the Southside has become a nuisance and impacts many long-term residents.

**BENEFITS**

Park Flag manages public parking in downtown Flagstaff and the surrounding neighborhoods. This plan:

- Better manages our existing – and limited – parking supply
- Provides a dedicated funding source to acquire or build additional parking
- Takes a comprehensive approach – addresses parking for residents, employees, business owners, customers and visitors
- Offers a more convenient and positive experience for visitors, residents and employees
- Provides free ECO passes for employees and additional bike racks as multi-modal options
- Parking Aides serve as ambassadors – by providing education on parking options and positive parking behavior

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND TALKING POINTS**

**Q: What do I say when someone asks WHY are we doing this now during a pandemic?**

**A:** Paid parking was suspended in March 2020 to help support downtown businesses due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19.

In recent months, parking availability in the core business district has again become limited. Parking counts conducted by Parking Aides have shown occupancy levels of 70 to 90% most days. With free parking and lack of enforcement, long-term parking patterns and unsafe parking behavior have returned to spaces intended for customer parking.

Some may suggest removing the kiosks altogether. On-street parking is an economic development tool. It supports customer spending at existing small businesses, business attraction and future investment. Also, when looking at downtown areas throughout Arizona and across the country, public parking facilities exist in nearly every-sized community. Downtown Flagstaff is unique given there has not been an investment into providing adequate public parking or managing the existing limited supply – until the creation of ParkFlag.

**Q: When will paid parking resume?**

**A:** Soft launch begins March 1, 2021. Parking Aides will provide information and warnings for the first month.

**Q: How were the hours determined?**

**A:** Hours are based on user data and when parking is in most demand. Prior to the COVID-19 suspension of paid parking, user data was reviewed, and hours were reduced. New hours will be:

Sunday – Thursday 9 am – 5 pm

Friday – Saturday 9 am – 8 pm

This allows patrons to grab a quick bite or coffee in the morning, happy hour, dinner, or shopping after 5.

**Q: How can I park for free?**

**A:** There are many options for free parking:

- 1) On-street parking after 5 pm Sunday – Thursday and 8 pm Friday – Saturday
- 2) 2-hour parking on Route 66
- 3) Public parking at City and County lots after 5 pm and weekends
- 4) Outside of the managed parking area
- 5) 20-minute curbside pick-up will remain available

**Q: What happens to the revenues?**

**A:** City Council passed an ordinance formally establishing separate accounting for the parking system. This means all revenues/expenses associated with the parking program stay separate from the City's general fund and may not be used for non-parking uses. Funds in this account must be associated with the operation and maintenance of the parking system and may not be used for other city initiatives, projects, areas of service, etc.

Furthermore, in addition to separate accounting, the ordinance also requires that a minimum of 20% of gross revenues be set aside in a separate fund dedicated to the acquisition of additional parking supply. This is a key provision and for the first time ever has a mechanism that sets aside funding for future parking facilities.

**Q: Will paid parking make customers go elsewhere and hurt business?**

**A:** Convenience is the key. Currently, available parking is difficult to find, and that hurts business. A better managed parking system offers customers convenient parking options and results in a better experience. Currently, because parking is free, our on-street spaces are almost 100% full of employees, downtown residents and students who park for extended periods of time. Customers end up circling until a space opens, or they end up leaving altogether.

**Q: How will customers know it is safe to use a kiosk?**

**A:** ParkFlag staff will be disinfecting kiosks daily with Microban, a 24-hour surface sanitizer commonly used in restaurants and retail stores.

Customers may also opt to download for free and use the Flowbird app for touchless payment.

**Q: What type of payment is accepted?**

**A:** Credit card payment is accepted at each pay station.

Cash is accepted at:

Leroux & Aspen kiosk, southeast corner

San Francisco & Aspen kiosk, northwest corner

N. San Francisco kiosk, mid-block between Birch and Cherry  
S. San Francisco kiosk, Lumberyard parking lot  
Visitor Center, during operating hours  
City Hall, during operating hours once re-opened

Payment by app is also available. Customers can download the Flowbird app for free and can pay and extend time by phone.

**Q: Are customers, using parking kiosks, protected from panhandling?**

**A:** Yes. Panhandling is not allowed within 25 feet of a kiosk while a customer is paying, per City ordinance. If a customer while paying is approached by a panhandler, this may be reported to ParkFlag.

**Q: What about employees? Where will they park?**

**A:** Employees and business owners have several options:

- Employee Permit – more than 350 spaces have been identified in dedicated areas for employee parking, including on-street spaces around Agassiz, Verde, Elden and Cherry, as well as the Phoenix Avenue lot.
- Monthly permit price recently reduced to \$10/month (from \$45/month).
- FREE EcoPass – ParkFlag will offer free bus passes to downtown workers.
- Bike – The FDBA recently installed additional bike racks to make commuting by bicycle more convenient.
- Free Parking – parking outside of the managed area continues to be free

**Q: I live downtown. How do I ensure parking for my vehicle near my house?**

**A:** ParkFlag offers a Residential Permit program for residents adjacent to the university and paid parking district. If interested, most residents (51%) submit a petition requesting implementation on the block in which they reside. Each resident receives 1 free permit per water meter.

**Q: Do Parking Aides just issue tickets?**

**A:** NO! Parking Aides are customer-service oriented and serve as ambassadors for downtown. They are trained to provide information on public parking, and frequently offer information on downtown businesses and things to do downtown.

Statistics from the most recent Annual Report show:

October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019

- Total Warnings Issued: 12,995
- Total Citations Issued: 4,308\*

September 30, 2017 (inception) – December 31, 2019

- Total Warnings Issued: 28,937
- Total Citations Issued: 8,163\*

*\* Many citations are not failure to pay; they are associated with ADA violations, parking more than 18" from curb, wrong-way parking on a one-way street, parking in bike lanes, and other unsafe parking behaviors.*

**Q: I got a ticket. Why is it so expensive?**

**A:** ParkFlag does not set the base price for receiving a citation – it is set by the State. Citation fees are distributed to the State, Coconino County, City of Flagstaff General Fund, Municipal Court and Victim Services – ParkFlag does not receive any portion.

There is an escalating fee structure in place for repeat offenders to try and correct poor parking behavior.

Not all citations are issued by ParkFlag. Flagstaff Police officers and private lot operators also issue tickets.

**Q: My car was towed / or received a boot. Did the City ParkFlag program do this?**

**A:** No. Park Flag’s priority is customer service and does NOT tow nor place boots on vehicles. Sometimes the owners of privately-owned parking lots contract with towing companies, and they will tow or put a boot on cars which are parked in violation of posted signs.

**Q: What if there is a problem or if I have a concern?**

**A:** This program was designed to serve a variety of users fairly. Any concerns should be raised with Gail Brockman, ParkFlag Interim Parking Manager.

**Q: Where can I get more information and who can I contact?**

ParkFlag Office  
6 E. Aspen Ave., Suite 200  
928-213-2960  
[www.parkflag.org](http://www.parkflag.org)

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For information only.