

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 3, 2017

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER

DOCKET TITLE:

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Introduction and First Reading. Consideration. Passage on First Reading of an Amendment to City Code section 10-4-8 to allow for the provision of an exemption to the existing 72-hour on-street parking rule.

...BODY

ISSUE: Consideration of a proposed ordinance to amend City Code section 10-4-8 to create an exemption to the existing 72-hour on-street parking rule.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council consider the proposed ordinance on first reading and set it for public hearing, and final passage on Saturday, May 13, 2017

BACKGROUND: City Code Section 10-4-8 currently prohibits vehicles from parking in the same place on City streets for more than 72-hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. This rule applies to all vehicles—including vehicles parked with stickers in Residential Parking Permit (RPP) districts. There are varying opinions about the original intent of this decades old rule. In practice today, the rule is used to encourage the turnover of on-street parking spaces. Different sections of City Code address abandoned vehicles (sections 5-8-21 and 5-8-22). In 2016, City Council directed staff to review this rule and this project was added to the Citywide Parking Work Plan.

At City Council's April 25 legislative meeting, Council directed staff to docket a 72-hour rule City Code amendment for a public hearing. This effort was the culmination of an extensive public outreach process including a subcommittee of the Traffic and Parking Board, review by the Alexandria Police Department and the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services.

The amendment, which was unanimously approved by the Traffic and Parking Board at its March 27, 2017 meeting, proposes an exemption process for the 72-hour rule. It would provide residents relief by allowing a vehicle to park on-street for a maximum of two weeks within 1/8 mile of a resident's home address. Exemptions would be provided on a per-vehicle basis. Residents would be allowed to apply for an exemption a maximum of four times per year per vehicle. As proposed, no more than two contiguous exemptions would be provided per vehicle.

All on-street restrictions would still be applicable; therefore, exempted vehicles would still be subject to restrictions in RPP districts should they not have the necessary RPP decal.

DISCUSSION: To begin the rule review, staff first undertook a preliminary analysis of enforcement data in the City between the years 2010 and 2015 (Attachment 2). Enforcement for section 10-4-8 is typically generated through resident complaints and is treated contextually. Officers who field complaints place a check notice on a vehicle and return within 72 hours (excluding Saturday, Sunday, and holiday hours). If a car has not been moved, an officer may cite the vehicle. Fine amounts are \$25. Vehicles cited multiple times (or vehicles that appear to be abandoned) are impounded at the discretion of the responding officer. The enforcement analysis showed that 87% percent of the enforcement related to this rule was driven by citizen reports, and that vehicles were moved 83% of the time upon an officer's second vehicle check. The analysis also indicated that reports are generated Citywide.

Public Outreach

Following this enforcement analysis, staff initiated a larger public process. This process included an AlexEngage questionnaire garnering 783 responses, a Citywide open house, two meetings of a subcommittee of the Traffic and Parking Board with time allotted for public comment, and a public hearing at the Traffic and Parking Board. Each of the aforementioned outreach components was advertised via eNews, T&ES social media, and the project's webpage. Additionally, local media sources covered the AlexEngage questionnaire and open house. The AlexEngage questionnaire results (Attachment 3) and the public comment package (Attachment 4) depict a broad spectrum of perspectives and preferences related to potential rule changes. In general, the preferred options tend to favor repeal of the existing ordinance or the creation of an exemption system. However, during the public open house and Traffic and Parking Board subcommittee meetings and Board hearing, staff received several comments from citizens who favor maintaining the rule as it exists today.

A subcommittee of the Traffic and Parking Board met twice to assess policy directions. Consistent with the broad spectrum of opinions related to the rule, the subcommittee was unable to reach consensus on a preferred policy direction but generally favored keeping the rule as is or creating an exemption process. This body directed City staff to propose amendment language for a potential exemption for consideration by the full Traffic and Parking Board. At its regular meeting on March 27, 2017, the Traffic and Parking Board's full body unanimously recommended that the Director of Transportation and Environmental Services advance the proposed City Code ordinance, which creates the exemption (Attachment 1), to City Council for consideration.

Proposed Amendment

The proposed exemption provides residents relief from section 10-4-8 by allowing a vehicle to park on-street for a maximum of two weeks within 1/8 mile of a resident's home address—roughly two blocks in Old Town. Exemptions would be provided on a per-vehicle basis. Residents would be allowed to apply for an exemption a maximum of four times per year per vehicle. As proposed, no more than two contiguous exemptions would be provided per vehicle. All on-street restrictions would still be applicable; therefore, exempted vehicles would still be subject to restrictions in RPP districts should they not have the necessary RPP decal. Staff

suggests the consideration of the 1/8 mile limit based on public input. Some residents noted that they do not have dependably available parking spaces immediately adjacent to or across from their homes. Often this is due to existing “no parking” restrictions, curb extensions, the linear length of their frontage, or proximity to non-residential land uses.

In total, the proposed exemptions allow a maximum of 56 days of relief per vehicle per year. As staff recommends that no more than two contiguous exemptions be granted, a vehicle could potentially be parked on-street in the same location for a period of 28 days. This should allow residents sufficient time to park on-street for vacation or business travel, assuming they are not subject to other signed restrictions.

Implementation of Proposed Exemption

Staff considered a number of logistical elements for the management of an exemption registration system. As posting exemptions on vehicle windshields may invite break-ins, staff proposes a system that is managed electronically. Using an online form, plates will be registered and approved through a system managed by the APD in coordination with T&ES. The exemption provision is slated to sunset on November 1st, 2018, at which time T&ES and APD will review a year’s worth of data between June 2017 and June 2018 to assess existing procedures and resident needs. Any necessary changes will be addressed in future Code changes. Should demand not warrant a continuation of the exemption program, staff will propose the removal of the exemption provision.

Next Steps

Once the ordinance is approved, the exemption will go into effect immediately. Staff will advertise the provision of the exemption via social media and the City’s website. A flyer about the exemption will also be included on check-notices placed on reported vehicles. Staff will also work with the Finance Department to include information about the exemption with the annual City decal mailers.

FISCAL IMPACT: Staff does not anticipate funding needs extending beyond the means of existing resources. The registration system will be automated. APD and T&ES staff will only monitor the automated system to approve exemption requests and respond to complaints. At the termination of the pilot, staff will reassess the program to determine whether or not fees should be considered to account for any administrative costs incurred by the program.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Ordinance Cover

Attachment 2: Ordinance

STAFF:

Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager

Yon Lambert, Director, T&ES

Michael L. Brown, Chief of Police

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