

Subject: Potential Overnight Paid Parking at the Meridian Community Centre

Recommendation:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report #2023-0219-Potential Overnight Paid Parking at the Meridian Community Centre, for information;

AND THAT Council endorse, in principle, the move to offer overnight, pay-for-service parking at the MCC;

AND THAT Council endorse an exemption to the Town's purchasing bylaw so as to allow sole sourcing this service to the Honk Mobile platform so as to adopt online payment for overnight parking;

AND THAT staff return with a subsequent report during Q4 containing specific details such as proposed fee levels, permissible times of day and exact locations, as well as associated amendments to the 2024 User Fee Guide for Council approval.

Background:

Residents living around the Meridian Community Centre (MCC) have approached the Town to see if they can park at the MCC parking lot after hours. The parking is freely available for the public to use currently. At present there is little to no demand for overnight parking at the MCC. Some adjacent residents are finding themselves in need of additional parking and are prepared to pay for the night-time use of the parking lot. This provides an opportunity to solve this problem for some residents and also create a new revenue stream for the Town.

The Town has researched different platforms to facilitate the online payment to minimize staff time to operationalize overnight paid parking at the MCC and other Town locations. Staff are seeking Council approval to introduce an online payment platform for parking at on-street locations and parking lots. Mobile technology, such as Honk Mobile, will allow users the opportunity to download an app on their mobile phone to pay for parking or make use of the HonkTAP.

Analysis:

Honk Mobile is a cloud solution that provides payment services for parking. An application can be downloaded through Apple's App Store, Google Play or alternatively can be accessed via a web browser through Honk Mobile's website (app.honkmobile.com).

Instructions for payment are typically displayed on signs that are provided by Honk Mobile. For enforcement purposes, the process is for Staff to check the licence plate to confirm payment. The adoption of paid parking at the MCC will require some amount of bylaw enforcement cost as the Town will need to both randomly and periodically have staff attend the MCC at night for enforcement purposes. This can be further explored in closed session if Council wishes further information. Enforcement costs are anticipated to be modest.

A number of municipalities in the Niagara Region have already adopted Honk Mobile as the preferred vendor, including Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls, St Catharines and Welland. Niagara College and Brock University also have adopted Honk Mobile within their parking lots. Staff have reached out to Niagara College, and received positive feedback about the College's experience.

Honk Mobile presented to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) about their product and services. SLT was impressed with this online paid parking solution. It is felt that this technology will meet the needs of the community for paid parking without staff getting involved in cash collections.

At time of writing the exact details of when paid parking will be allowed at the MCC, and how many (non-dedicated) spots will be available for purchase are still the subject of review. Should Council endorse this course of action in principle, hours of day, limitations on use and other related topics will be the subject of a future report, prior to year's end.

Financial Considerations:

The Town has not negotiated any terms with Honk Mobile. Other municipalities in Niagara pay approximately \$25 month per sign per month. The service for each transaction is \$0.25 and is paid by the customer. There is minimal cost to the Town. Traditionally parking meters were installed in municipalities. Using cloud solutions eliminates the capital cost of parking meters.

The parking rates will be included in the 2024 User Fee Guide as part of the 2024 Budget approval process.

Alternatives Reviewed:

The alternative is to have customers pay at the MCC for parking which would be additional work for Staff. The Town's system is not set up for collecting parking fees. The Town currently does not have paid parking and it does not make sense to start its own paid parking when 4 of the largest paid parking municipalities and 2 post-secondary institutions in the Niagara Region have adopted a third party: Honk Mobile to process the online payments.

Strategic Plan Relationship: Community Development and Growth

As the Town continues to grow, there will be additional parking demands. Honk Mobile is a third-party solution which will facilitate paid parking for the customer and cash collections and enforcement for the Town.

Consultation:

Parking department at Niagara College

Senior Leadership Team

Honk Mobile

Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:

N/A

Prepared and Recommended by:

Teresa Quinlin-Murphy, FCPA, FCA, MBA
Director of Corporate Services & Treasurer

Prepared and Submitted by:

David Cribbs, BA, MA, JD, MPA
Chief Administrative Officer