



Events



Menu

Now more than ever, local news matters.



[Statewide COVID-19 Vaccine Site Info.](#)

NEWS | OPINIONATOR

New paid parking permit proposal is an insult to Princeton residents

By Community Contributor Updated May 23, 2021 11 Comments



An open letter to the members of the Princeton Permit Parking Task Force: David Cohen, Leticia Fraga and Michelle Pirone Lambros

I attended the April 17th online zoom meeting regarding your new parking permit proposal. Speaking as a longtime resident (I've been here for nearly three decades, and my wife Alice grew up in this house) it is, quite frankly, an affront to propose charging residents and homeowners for the honor of parking on their own street, much less in front of their own home. Residents and homeowners of this decidedly middle class section of Princeton pay dearly in property taxes for the honor of just existing in their own homes. What you deem "a luxury" is actually a de facto perk, paid for by the blood, sweat and yearly worry of not only paying the local taxes, but also the required resident maintenance, upkeep of, and clearing the snow from the walks adjacent to one's property

As I understand it, your proposal is fueled by the notion of eliminating parking on Wiggins Street in order to create a dedicated bicycle lane. If enacted, the fact that people that work and are employed in town will lose the use of these spaces is certainly an issue to be addressed. But rather than forcing these workers to have to park and walk yet further from their jobs, there is a rather obvious solution.

I have recently visited and checked on three different weekdays, at different times (during work hours), the Spring Street and Chambers Street parking garages. And as I suspected, the top decks of these garages are a veritable wasteland of available spaces, well over 100-plus each, with usually the next deck down also having quite a number available. Note that the Spring Street garage's top most deck is currently



closed by barricades – possibly due to the 2014 and 2020 suicides, and has yet even more spaces sitting vacant. A further possible consideration: Another, even more impressive wasteland of empty spaces at the top level of the Avalon Princeton parking garage (formerly the Princeton Hospital garage) might provide a similar accommodation for Princeton High School parking needs.

A sensible solution that would not only make residents pleased – but also make in-town workers and employees happy – would be to arrive at some sort of an arrangement with one or both of these garages to issue special permits for the workers to park in these uppermost spaces. The workers would be happy, in that they would now have an assured space right in the heart of where they work – rather than have to scramble and compete for spaces that are now ever further from where they're employed. The residents and homeowners would be pleased in that these cars would not be a new fixture of everyday life on their streets. Ditto, a similar arrangement could be arrived at with the Avalon Princeton garage – in which Princeton High School personnel could park on the top deck and be a short walk from the school.

The proposed “robocop” via a paid vendor platform is yet a further invasion of an already unpopular trend in Princeton – to pay extra for unneeded and unwelcome, currently sexy, technology to address a rather basic and timeworn issue that is already addressed satisfactorily in our neighborhood. The current signage that reflects the permitting that the homeowners and residents fought for (with good reason) along with the ability to call the police for the occasional parking violator, works and continues to work swimmingly in our neighborhood.

With all the above said, whatever changes you ultimately decide to impose, they must include the preservation of the right of the taxpaying homeowners and residents and their occasional guests and contractors to park without an additional fee or penalty on the street where they live. As you pointed out during the meeting – the homeowners and residents may not actually “own” the streets or sidewalks they live on – but they surely are required to pay handsomely for them – and thus their continued allowance to park on them is the very least that can be afforded them.

With all due respect – and grateful thanks in advance for your consideration in these matters.

Bruce Lawton
Hawthorne Avenue

Editor's note: A presentation will be made about the parking permit program and pilot at the [Princeton Council meeting at 7 p.m. Monday night on Zoom](#) (the council is still

