

# Council to consider both increasing parking violation fines and variable rate parking

The Bethlehem Gadfly Parking, Serious Issues September 30, 2019

*(122nd in a series of posts on parking)*

So 5:30pm tomorrow the City Council Public Safety Committee (Colon, Negrón, Van Wirt) will entertain not only the Bethlehem Parking Authority's proposal for an increased fine structure but also consideration — suggested by the Mayor as a result of public and Council interest — of variable rate meter pricing.

And it looks like there will be discussion and voting on them in the Council meeting that immediately follows the Committee meeting.

As always in Gadville, we go to the primary sources with (as best we can) an open mind.

So here are the two pertinent documents from the BPA:

[Fine Recommendation Memo 8.20.19](#)

[BPA Variable Rate Memorandum 8-28-19](#)

As best Gadfly can tell from his own so far only quick perusal of the fine document, the increases are the same as proposed in 2018.

Gadfly will only note at this point that he has heard no outcry in the 3/4's of a year that the fines have been out of line with the meters about public disgruntlement at and/or loss of revenue by the BPA.

Doesn't mean there hasn't been any, just that same has not reached his ears.

Now variable rate pricing might be unfamiliar to many followers.

Here's a definition by the BPA consultant:

*Variable rate pricing —also known as demand-responsive pricing, or performance pricing—means setting curbside parking meter rates based on demand in a block or zone at a particular time of day. The goal is to make sure there are always a few open spaces per block and encourage people to park only as long as they need. Theoretically, this arrangement should enable more customers to shop or eat in a business district.*

I understand it to mean that the BPA has the technological ability to vary the meter rates at different locations and different times of the day. Pretty cool.

Here is the consultant's conclusion:

*Based on our review of the Desman report and on our own research conducted as part of this project, Kimley-Horn does not believe that performance-based, dynamic, or progressive on-street parking rates should be implemented at this time. This opinion is based on the fact that curbside utilization is relatively low, there are no large concentrations of intense demand, current monthly and hourly rates are low and offer no variability between on-street and off-street transient rates, and the level of effort and cost required to collect the necessary performance data is prohibitive given the size of the BPA and its budget. The City and BPA could pilot test variable rates based on location and/or time of day for specific streets or blocks but significant surpluses on adjacent streets/blocks and within nearby off-street lots*

*and garage would suggest that the increased rates would simply drive parkers to these other areas of lesser utilization.*

So, let's chew on these two good topics over lunch!

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