



SUBJECT: Parking capacity measures at Beachway and Lowville Park

TO: Environment, Infrastructure & Community Services Cttee.

FROM: Recreation Services Department

Report Number: RS-09-20

Wards Affected: 1, 2 and 3

File Numbers: 745-03

Date to Committee: November 9, 2020

Date to Council: November 23, 2020

Recommendation:

Direct the Director of Transportation to implement option 1 for parking management at Beachway Park effective May 2021 as outlined in recreation services report RS-09-20; and

Direct the Director of Transportation to implement option 1 (pilot extension for 2021) for parking management at Lowville Park as outlined in recreation services report RS-09-20 and report back in fall 2021 with long-term recommendations for this site.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present recommendations for Council's approval on parking capacity measures at Beachway and Lowville Park. This initiative connects with the following strategic directions of the City's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan - From Vision to Focus (V2F):

- Increase economic prosperity and community responsive city growth
- Support sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment
- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture

Background and Discussion:

The 2009 Parks, Recreation and Cultural Assets Master Plan referred to a five-level Parks classification system; City Parks were identified as waterfront lands, forested areas and woodlots, ravines, ponds, etc. With their unique features of forested areas, ponds and waterfront lands; Beachway and Lowville Park fall within this category.

Over the years, both locations have been popular parks both with residents and non-residents and have posed challenges pertaining to capacity, parking lot size, asset maintenance, to name a few. In the summer months, both locations attract events and gatherings such as picnics, outdoor activities and more. Summer 2020 posed additional challenges due to Covid-19 and the imposed gathering size limitations. To address the typical capacity issues and the Covid-19 concerns, additional measures were activated to better manage parking lot capacity and number of park visitors.

Beachway Park

Beachway Park is one of the City's most popular attractions especially during heat waves in the summer months. It is a regional park operated by the City and unlike other municipal parking lots located in the downtown, Beachway lots do not require payment as these lots are outside of the Downtown Parking District. The most popular lots used for Beachway access are the 4 located directly adjacent to the entrance, however, there are ample other paid parking opportunities in close proximity. To ensure the safety of citizens and the adherence to provincial orders, the following measures were put in place for the 2020 summer months:

- Pay duty police
- Parking ambassadors on site to direct traffic
- Dedicated drop off zones
- Enhanced signage (directional, no parking/tow away zones)
- Parking enforcement including increased fines for illegal parking along the pipeline (\$250)
- Communication plan which included regular social media messaging and the creation of a map identifying alternative parking options.

The cost of these additional measures (from May to September 7, 2020) were approximately \$75,000. These arrangements did not create additional parking opportunities but allowed for better management of the available inventory. Parking ambassadors were critical to the success of this plan as they communicated with each other regularly using two-way radios to discuss parking spot availability for customers. Staff dealt with irate customers on a regular basis and being that they were re-deployed sports field ambassadors and full-time staff; were not necessarily the right fit to deal with the escalated behavior. Parking ambassadors received the ongoing support of on-call

supervisors as well as regular training and check-ins with their direct supervisor. A total of 1,174 parking fines were issued over the 4-month period.

Lowville Park

Lowville Park is a desired location for its beautiful landscape; specifically trails, pond and playground. In previous years, this location was permitted for picnics and large group gatherings; both of which were put on hold this summer due to the pandemic. Part of the park's appeal is its remote location which also poses a challenge with its one and only parking lot available for visitors. To better manage parking capacity and provide more opportunities for usage of the park, the following measures were employed in 2020:

- Implementation of an online reservation system in which park users had to register for their preferred 3-hour block in advance and validate their booking with staff upon entry
- Parking ambassadors were onsite to manage parking lot capacity (May to end of July) and to validate reservations once system was implemented (July 30-September 7, 2020)
- No bookings were allowed for picnics and large gatherings

The cost for these measures were approximately \$40,000. The reservation process was well received by the community and the time limits encouraged users to restrict their visit to the 3-hour limit, thus allowing for more unique visit opportunities. Parking enforcement assisted with imposing the time limits and as a result, 105 tickets were issued over the duration of the 6-week pilot. These process changes contributed positively to the park assets such that staff witnessed grass in a better state and found less garbage in the area.

Strategy/process

A history of parking capacity concerns and positive comments regarding measures put in place at the two City parks this summer confirm the desire to implement long term changes. Options considered in this report are based on feedback from customers and staff, budget and overall guiding principles related to accessing City parks.

After considerable discussions regarding access to City parks, staff developed the following guiding principles:

- Remove as many barriers as possible to accessing recreation;
- Access to parks will remain free;
- Measures such as reservations and paid parking will be considered where they contribute to a positive customer experience;

- Measures considered must be fiscally responsible and considerations for the safety of staff must be at the forefront.

It is evident that both locations are faced with their unique set of challenges such as limited parking and impeded traffic flow. In addition, measures implemented for summer 2020 were quickly rolled out with limited resources and planning time available. As such, long-term measures need to consider the appropriate level of staff required for onsite issue management, additional resources required for parking enforcement, the overall oversight of these processes and budget requirements.

Options Considered

With the objective to maximize access to City parks while better managing parking capacity, the following options were considered:

- Revert to status quo: Staff considered not implementing any further changes to address the concerns. This option is not recommended as these issues have been longstanding, require attention and their urgency escalated due to Covid. Lastly, Covid has created a need for advanced reservations, for example with restaurants and other leisure activities, and that need is likely to remain as a convenience factor post pandemic.
- Parking Ambassadors: Staff considered deploying parking ambassadors at both locations to manage in/out of vehicles and re-direct customers once capacity has been reached. This option requires ongoing operating costs and the creation of a new position specifically for this purpose as part-time sports field ambassadors are not the right fit for the task. This option is challenging to administer at Beachway Park due to the geography of the parking lots and the number of entry and exit points and therefore not recommended at this location.
- Reservation System: Staff considered implementing a reservation system for both location such that patrons may book their park visit in advance. This option is not recommended at Beachway park due to the average visit length (½ or full day on average) and the parking lot configurations. This option is feasible for Lowville but would require ongoing staff costs to administer. Alternatively, the procurement and installation of automatic gates could be another way to validate reservations but would involve an upfront capital investment (approximately \$250,000 for a gate house and gates) and require ongoing maintenance and management.
- Residency access: Staff considered limiting access to City parks based on residency status. It was decided that this would be very challenging to implement

and monitor. In addition, Beachway is deemed a regional park and as such would pose additional challenges to monitor access and as a result, staff are not recommending this option.

- **Paid parking:** Staff considered treating parking lots for these destination parks as premium lots and thus collecting parking fees through parking machines. This is a preferred option for Beachway Park as it will generate revenues to offset the costs of parking enforcement resources and will encourage park users to walk/bike to the venue thus reducing the pressures on the limited parking available. This option would be used in conjunction with parking enforcement to address parking infractions.
- **Pay duty police:** Staff considered requesting pay duty officers to manage traffic at City parks but given the complexity of traffic flow and parking lot geography, it would be preferred to manage with city staff. Pay duty officers could be used to supplement staff presence especially during peak periods and to assist in deescalating customer conflicts.

Recommendations

Given the above considerations, staff is recommending option 1 Paid Parking for Beachway Park and Option 1 Reservation System pilot extension for Lowville Park for Council's approval:

Options	Details	Timing	Rates (if applicable)	Financial Details
Beachway Park				
Option 1 (Recommended)	Paid Parking (parking machines) and enforcement	7 days /week, 9am-9pm, From May 1- September 30	Premium rates of \$2.50/hourly up to a \$20.00 daily maximum	Requires a capital investment of \$95,000 for the installation of 10 parking machines including the associated labour and materials for installation.
Option 2	Paid parking (parking machines), enforcement and parking	7 days /week, 9am-9pm, May 1- September 30	Premium rates of \$2.50/hourly up to a	Requires a capital investment of \$95,000 for the installation of 10 parking machines including the

	ambassadors (4) (weekends only)		\$20.00 daily maximum	associated labour and materials for installation. In addition, this option requires an annual operating budget investment of approx. \$65,000 for parking ambassadors.
Option 3	Paid parking (through reservation system), reservation system, enforcement and parking ambassadors (4) (weekend only)	Weekend & holidays only 9am-9pm From May 1 – September 30	Daily Pass of \$20.00 for Beach access	Requires an annual operating budget investment of approx. \$65,000 for parking ambassadors and \$5,000 for the reservation system for a total of \$70,000
Lowville Park				
Option 1 (Recommended)	Summer 2021 pilot extension Reservation system with parking ambassadors Evaluate success of pilot extension and recommend long term measures for consideration through 2022 budget process	Evenings 3pm to 8pm on weekdays and weekends 9am-8pm during summer season (May 1 to September 30)	N/A	Requires a one-time investment of approx. \$45,000 for parking ambassadors, \$25,000 for enforcement officers and \$5,000 for the reservation system for a total of \$75,000
Option 2	Paid parking (parking machines) and enforcement	Evenings 3pm to 8pm and weekends 9am-8pm	\$1.75/hourly up to \$14.00 daily maximum	Requires a capital investment of \$20,000 (for 2 machines including

		during summer season (May 1 to September 30)		installation) and \$25,000 of ongoing operating costs for enforcement officers.
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Financial Matters:

Total Financial Impact

The recommended option 1 at Beachway will require the installation of 10 parking machines for a total capital cost of \$95,000. Staff anticipate that these costs would be recover within the first year of operation through the collection of fees estimated at around \$170,000. Minor ongoing operating costs to support the parking machines are estimated at approx. \$2,000/year.

The recommended option 1 at Lowville will require one-time funding of \$75,000 in 2021 to cover staff costs and hosting fees for the reservation system pilot extension. Total financial impacts for the recommendations are summarized below:

Location	Capital Costs	Operating Costs	Ongoing Costs	Estimated Revenue
Beachway Park	\$95,000	N/A	\$2,000	\$170,000
Lowville Park	N/A	\$75,000	N/A	N/A

Source of Funding

The financial impacts of the options approved by Council will be brought forward as part of the 2021 Proposed Budget.

Climate Implications

Paid parking will likely encourage park users to find alternate parking locations and/or modes of accessing the park and as result there will be less traffic in the area.

Engagement Matters:

From May to September 7, 2020, staff have been informally chatting with park users to understand challenges and have received ample feedback that while the measures in place for summer 2020 were appreciated, that they did not fully address the long-term issues.

Staff will inform the public of the approved for Spring 2021 through the City's website, social media and signage at the locations.

Conclusion:

It is unfortunate that City parks such as Beachway and Lowville have limited parking capacity. Implementing paid parking at Beachway park is consistent with industry practices and will assist in generating revenues to offset expenses incurred from additional enforcement. Parking fees will encourage carpooling, walking and biking to this premium location. Extending the reservation system accompanied with parking ambassador support at Lowville for Summer 2021 will allow staff the opportunity to gather additional insights around the feasibility of long-term strategies at this location while addressing current parking capacity concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

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Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Council.