

# City of Wilmington



MICHAEL S. PURZYCKI  
Mayor

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** All Honorable Members of City Council

**FROM:** Tanya L. Washington, Chief of Staff *TW*

**DATE:** September 16, 2019

**SUBJ:** Summary of Parking, Ticketing, Towing, Appeals and Payment Reforms

The City of Wilmington is continually striving to improve the delivery of services to Wilmington's residents and visitors. It also recognizes its responsibility to ensure that on-street parking is available for visitors to our City as well as for businesses and residents who live and work here.

We have been interacting with citizens, businesses, our internal staff and outside stakeholders such as AAA Mid Atlantic over the past several months regarding needed reforms to our system of parking regulations and regarding issues that arise with ticketing, booting, towing, the right to appeal and making payment.

These reforms are intended to enhance the customer experience in Wilmington and improve government efficiency in service delivery, as well as provide better accountability and transparency. We appreciate the input provided by AAA Mid Atlantic and others in helping us plan a course forward.

The reforms include:

### Customer Service Call Center:

- In July 2019, the City implemented a parking call center (302.576.2620) to provide better customer service, reduce wait times, resolve problems and concerns and educate and inform residents and visitors about the City's parking system. Customer can also use the new central number to make payments. Wait times have been reduced dramatically and the level of customer service has improved just as dramatically.

### Parking Permits:

- The City provides a FREE online residential parking permit system, but improvements are warranted and soon, changes will be made.
- The City will send a renewal notice within 45 days of the expiration of a parking permit.
- Once a resident applies for a permit, they will receive an email notice within 48 hours as to the status of their application. That emailed notice will also include a permit expiration date.
- We are also exploring the possibility of the City's Parking Enforcement Officers placing a reminder notice on a vehicle that a permit will be expiring soon.

**Meters:**

- The City's decision to implement the Parkmobile app has been very successful. Currently, about 40% of meter transactions are through the Parkmobile app which is easy to use and provides various levels of convenience. Use of the app also provides the customer and City with a record of the transaction thus reducing the likelihood that decision-making by either the customer or City is disputed. The written record also helps resolve any errors made by the City or the customer.
- The City recently expanded the Parkmobile app to the Riverfront area and it is our goal to have the app available at all City meters within the next month.
- Looking even further ahead, the City's plan over the next year or so is to replace older meters with kiosks and then to eventually make kiosks available throughout the City in place of meters. The Parkmobile app is currently available and is used at kiosks and will continue to be made available as the use of kiosks grows.

**Issuing of Citations (tickets) for Violations:**

- Parking Enforcement Officers (PREOs) will soon be using state-of-the-art, hand-held devices, which will store information regarding data from kiosks and the Parkmobile app. The new devices will enable the PREO to take photos of violations and print tickets with the photo displayed as part of the ticket. The new devices will also have GPS technology to pinpoint PREO locations, location of vehicles, and to assist in mapping information as needed.

**Appeals Process:**

- The City will, in early 2020 if not sooner, implement an online appeals process. Customers will no longer have to file an appeal in-person at the Redding City County Building or mail-in an appeal, although both of those options will still be available. In fact, for walk-in customers who do not have internet access, the Office of Constituent Services will assist them in filing their appeals.

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- Once the new appeals system is in place, parking appeals will be processed the same way as red-light camera appeals are handled, which has proven to be a very fair and efficient process. The customer will receive email notification of the City's receipt of the appeal within 24 hours. Once a ticket has been appealed, it is suspended (not further penalties may accrue) until a decision has been made regarding the appeal. An appeals officer will then determine within one week if the parking ticket is valid. The customer will receive notification of the appeal decision within 20 days.

**Court Appeals**

- Should a customer wish to challenge the appeal officer's decision, the customer may request a court appeal which will be processed as it is currently by the Office of Constituent Services.

**Consolidated Appeals Process:**

- The City is exploring the feasibility of creating a consolidated appeals function within the Office of Constituent Services bringing together the appeal processes and staff for matters related to parking tickets, towing/booting disputes and for red light safety camera citations and instant ticket appeals for citations issued by the Department of Licensing and Inspections. Such an appeals section could provide consistency in the delivery of services and shared resources and would confine the appeals process to one office that acts independently of the Finance and L&I Departments which manage the enforcement functions of parking and code policies and laws.

**Payments/Collections:**

- The City is working through the details of a plan it hopes to implement soon regarding a revised online citation/ticket payment system that would eliminate the current customer surcharge for processing a payment. The City is also exploring an option of customers being given the opportunity to make payment arrangements for outstanding tickets. Customers who adhere to a payment arrangement, which means not missing a payment, would eliminate the possibility of having their vehicle booted or towed.
- The City will also soon be implementing an enhanced collections/notification process that will inform customers in advance of a customer accumulating large balances on their account. This process could also involve the use of text messages to inform customers.

**Towing:**

- The City will be issuing a request for proposals (RFP) in October for towing services. The current towing contract, administered by the Wilmington Police Department (WPD), will expire in November. The City will decide shortly whether to issue two RFPs—one

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for parking ticket enforcement that will possibly be managed by the appeals function within the Office of Constituent Services, and the other RFP for the towing needs of the WPD which includes criminal investigations, to be managed by the WPD.

- The new contract or contracts will require the towing company to provide consistent and accurate information to the City and to the customer about a vehicle that is towed, such as the date it arrives at the towing facility, how long it was or will be stored, copies of notices sent to the customer to inform them that their vehicle has been towed and the process for resolving debts and retrieving the vehicle. The required information to the customer will also include information about when a vehicle may be disposed of should a customer choose not to pay fines or fees owed and claim the vehicle.
- Should the towing company fail to follow any of the data collection, reporting or notification requirements, the contract will be terminated, and the City will issue a new RFP.
- Any customer who suspects that their vehicle has been towed should call the City's Customer Service Center at 302.576.2620.

**Public Education:**

- In an effort to reduce misunderstandings, educate the public and encourage civic responsibility to follow parking laws and policies, the City will soon establish a process by which information such as property transfer records, or information from cooperating landlords, is used to notify new Wilmington residents of the City's parking regulations.