

YSAG: Young Somerville Advisory Group

A group of 21-35 year old Somerville residents working to increase the number of young residents engaged in our civic community, improve the quality of City services offered and increase communication between City government and the young adults that live here. Our goal is to serve in an advisory capacity to the Mayor and City staff, initiate and organize activities targeted to our age demographic, and advocate on behalf of fellow Young Somerville residents. These newsletters are intended to inform you about local resources, City goings-on, and YSAG activities.

--- August Happenings ---

Parking and Traffic Survey Results >>

According to an informal survey about driving and parking conducted by the Young Somerville Advisory Group, 78% of respondents own or regularly drive a car, and 63% have a Somerville Resident Parking Sticker. 15% of respondents are a member of a car share such as Zipcar. The top three reported reasons for receiving a parking ticket were street sweeping (63%), permit parking only (30%) and snow removal (28%). Only 17% of respondents reported being aware of parking changes in Somerville starting August 1, 2009.

Meeting Summary >>

In light of the recent parking changes enacted by the City, Young Somerville Advisory Group heard from City representatives Jim Kotzuba, Director of Traffic and Parking, and Tom Champion, Director of Communications, during its August meeting. Both Jim and Tom are also members of the Somerville Parking Solutions Task Force. Jim and Tom updated members of YSAG on the latest traffic and parking happenings:

- The Financial Advisory Committee recommended in May 2009 that the City implement city-wide residential permit parking and higher metered parking rates to cope with deep cuts in State funding. These recommendations were approved by the City Traffic Commission, challenged by petition, and then approved by the Traffic Board.
- Mayor Curtatone convened the Parking Solutions Task Force, composed of business leaders, residents and City officials, to serve as an advisory board for the new parking changes. The Task Force delivered a report to the City with short and long-term recommendations, some of which have recently been enacted:
 - Metered parking rates in Somerville increased to \$1 per hour
 - Metered parking rates operate two additional hours, now ending at 8 pm.
 - Starting this fall, resident permit parking will be implemented throughout the city, with the exception of 20 major streets. These major thoroughfares

will allow non-permitted 2-hour parking, except from 2:30 am – 8 am, and unrestricted permit parking.

- The City is exploring the use of kiosks instead of traditional parking meters to increase payment options for drivers and allow the City additional flexibility with parking rates and time limits.

YSAG Feedback >>

YSAG Members had many questions for Jim Kotzuba and Tom Champion. Jim assured the group that plenty of notice would be given to residents of streets that will now require residential permits for parking. In addition to the community notice, the parking department will issue warnings instead of tickets during the initial two weeks of permit parking for the new streets. They also explained that the current parking changes are part of a multi-phase effort. Increasing metered parking rates and expanding permit parking compose Phase 1, while Phases 2 and 3 of the plan will include implementing parking kiosks, commissioning a parking study and making additional follow-up recommendations to the City.

Another concern of YSAG members was the issue of lack of space to place a vehicle when going out-of-town for extended periods of time. Members who did not have someone who could move their car and did not want to get a ticket for street cleaning wanted a safe alternative place to leave their vehicle in the city. Jim and Tom suggested that might be difficult because locating off street parking is very challenging in Somerville; however they agreed to bring up the issue at the next Parking Solutions Task Force meeting.

Other questions and concerns raised concerned guest permit parking passes, the ability to pay tickets online, Zipcar parking, and contractor work that impacts residential parking.

YSAG Recommendations >>

1. Locate and establish long-term off-street parking lots or spaces where residents without driveways can safely leave their cars for 1-2 weeks for a reasonable fee.
2. Offer residents the ability to pay for tickets and apply for residential permits and guest passes online.
3. Pursue a comprehensive communications strategy to ensure that Somerville residents, especially highly mobile young residents, are aware of all parking changes.

YSAG Membership Drive >>

Young Somerville Advisory Group has several openings for new members to get involved with the group. Membership vacancies will be filled on a rolling, first come-first served basis, so visit www.somervillema.gov/youngsomerville and get your application

in today!

For More Information >>

- City's Parking Policy Changes:
<http://www.somervillema.gov/spotlight.cfm?id=75>.
- Parking Solutions Task Force report:
http://www.somervillema.gov/cos_content/documents/ParkingSolutionsTaskForceReport.pdf
- To obtain a Somerville residential parking permit:
<http://www.somervillema.gov/section.cfm?org=traffic&page=138>.

For more information on Young Somerville Advisory Group, or to make suggestions and give input about future topics go to:
<http://www.somervillema.gov/section.cfm?org=MAYOR&page=1173> or contact Jackie Rosetti at Jrossetti@somervillema.gov
