



COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORT

OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Date: August 26, 2015

Agenda Item #: 7

Agenda Item: Discussion and possible action regarding options available to the City to permanently reserve parking spaces located in the public right-of-way for park use at the Caswell Tennis Center.

Vote 3-0-0-1. MPT Tovo was off the dais.

Sponsors/Department: Parks & Recreation Department and Austin Transportation Department

Summary of Discussion

Kimberly McNeeley, Assistant Director with the Parks and Recreation Department (PAR), provided background information related to parking in the Caswell Tennis Center, located at 2312 Shoal Creek Boulevard. In 1931, PAR purchased the tract of land that was then called Shoal Creek Park. In 1947, City Council passed a resolution identifying the portion of the tract located on 24th Street and Lamar Boulevard for construction of the Caswell Tennis Center. In 2005, PAR installed “parking only” signs along the straight-in to designate the parking to Caswell patrons in front of the tennis center. In 2011, the Austin Transportation Department (ATD) notified PAR that the designated parking spots were located in the right-of-way and so the signs would need to be removed. In 2012, ATD installed 4 parking spaces for Caswell staff and multiple 2-hour parking signs along Shoal Creek in front of the tennis center, but not in the right-of-way.

By 2015, ATD and the Office of Real Estate Services (ORES) determined that the parking spaces in the right-of-way should be maintained by ATD because all. Thus, parking spaces reserved only for Caswell Tennis Center patrons would be inconsistent with ATD’s standard practices. PAR has worked with ATD to mitigate the concerns and they have come to an agreement to dedicate twenty-eight spaces as parkland, but the departments require Council approval to make the change.

Currently, ATD is working with West Campus neighborhood associates to develop the West Campus parking expansion plan, which will better manage parking in the West Campus area. In addition to this plan, City staff has ordered a survey of the land to identify which space is right-of-way and which is parkland and found that the land is actually considered as right-of way, therefore the land falls under the authority of ATD. According to City practice, reserved parking is not permitted in a right-of-way for a specific or long-term purpose. In the case of Caswell Tennis Center, the City has made an exception in the past but would prefer not cause inconsistencies throughout the city.

Based on the desire to remain consistent and the need for parking, staff offered three options to be considered. First, the straight-in parking spaces could be permanently designated for Caswell by making it dedicated parkland, and it would be managed by the tennis pro shop. Secondly, the straight-in parking spaces could remain in the right-of-way and the Caswell Tennis Center is given permission to issue parking permits to the tennis patrons. Lastly, metered parking could be included along Shoal Creek Boulevard. Lee Austin, an engineer from ATD, explained that the director of ATD feels that the best way to resolve the issue would be to possibly exchange land for future mitigation and future transpiration purposes so that the land would entirely be under the governance of PARD. Another issue facing the Caswell Tennis Center is the language school that is nearby the tennis center and their need for parking.

- *Permanently reserved spaces*

CM Garza asked about the metered parking spots downtown that are sometimes used as valet parking spots for businesses. Austin explained that the City does issue short-term rentals for parking which is a service that is paid for by the business to help make up for the meter revenue lost during those times.

- *Unmetered parking*

CM Pool asked if the unmetered area on the eastside of the tennis center can be regulated by the City. Austin explained that the spaces can indeed be regulated since the spaces are in the right-of-way. In addition, the City has received a request from the University Area Partners to complete the parking plan at Caswell Tennis Center before addressing any metering in the area.

- *Extended times for metered parking*

CM Pool inquired about the possibility of extending the hours of the current two hour parking located at the tennis center. Austin explained that the City's meters can certainly be extended, but as far as making more available will pose a conflict with the language school if their students end up taking up a lot of that extended time. However, if the language school students have to pay for the extended metered parking then they will most likely park somewhere else.

- *Building additional parking*

CM Zimmerman asked staff if additional parking could be built because based on the map of the area it appears that there is room. Austin explained that there is in fact room and if PARD had authority over the right-of-way that more parking could be added. Zimmerman also noted that it appears there would even be room for water retention for the impervious cover.

- *Parkland dedication*

CM Pool asked for the historical background regarding supporting the dedication of parkland. Staff explained that ATD is amenable to giving PARD the 28 parking spaces so that the PARB can submit a recommendation to Council to then dedicate the spaces as parkland. PARD would work with the contractor at the Caswell Tennis Center to ensure that the parking is then made available for the tennis patrons. This agreement would allow ATD to keep some street parking in the right-of-way for non-tennis patrons and work with Council to decide on a plan for metered parking.

Public Comments

- Ann Graham spoke in favor.
- Leslie Cameron spoke in favor.
- Michael Seghers donated time to Leslie Cameron.
- Bryan Snoddy spoke in favor.
- Carol Welder spoke in favor.
- Mike McHone spoke in favor.

Direction

PARD staff will work with ATD to allow PARD to ultimately be responsible for the 28 parking spaces in order to remove them from ATD's authority. Furthermore, CM Pool requested two follow up memos from staff. One explaining how to vacate the right-of-way and make it parkland and another about the resolutions that may have been made in the past that designated the eastside of Shoal Creek for the revenue making for the West Campus neighborhoods.

Recommendation

The recommendation to direct PARD staff to work with ATD to transfer authority over the right-of-way to PARD before allowing Council to formally dedicate it as parkland was approved on CM Zimmerman's motion and Vice Chair Garza's second.