

November 4, 2021

James R. Tierney, Town Manager
Narragansett Town Hall
25 Fifth Avenue
Narragansett, RI 02882

SUBJECT: Narragansett Pier Area & Boon Street Parking Evaluation

Dear Mr. Tierney:

As requested, I have completed an update to the 2011 review and evaluation of parking in the Pier and Boon Street areas of Town. This evaluation was comprised of three primary tasks: (1) *Data and Document Review*, which included a review of recent parking, traffic, and related reports, data sets, regulations, newspaper articles, and written correspondence; (2) *Town staff Interviews* that included the Town Manager, Chief of Police, Director of Community Development, and the Town Clerk; and (3) *Field Investigations* to observe parking conditions, operations, and performance in the Pier Area of Town. No primary data collection was included. Based on visual observations of parking characteristics, occupancy, and regulations, and on the results of tasks 1 and 2 above, strategies were identified for better managing summer seasonal parking demand considering the needs of customers/visitors, beach goers, residents, businesses, & employees.

2011 Narragansett Pier Area Parking Evaluation

The 2011 study sought to identify key strategies and recommendations for better managing parking demand given a reported lack of available parking during the peak summer season. The focus of this effort was to optimize the use of on-street parking given the sometimes-competing needs of businesses, employees, residents, beach goers and other visitors. By 2011, the Town had already implemented:

- a parking permit program for Pier Area businesses and residents
- parking time limits on streets adjacent to the Pier Marketplace
- the Pier Area Shuttle linking the beach and surrounding businesses with a large remote surface parking lot at the Narragansett Elementary School

A primary focus of the 2011 evaluation was to incentivize beach goers to use the paid beach parking lots or the free elementary school parking lot and shuttle to the beach instead of parking on Ocean Road, Narragansett Avenue, and adjacent streets. The focus of this effort was to complement Pier Area goals of:

- reducing beach overcrowding; and
- providing more access and parking turnover on Ocean Road and nearby commercial streets to benefit area restaurants, nearby business districts, and walkers along the seawall.

The 2011 parking evaluation resulted in three primary recommendations:

1. Implement seasonal, time-restricted, paid parking on Ocean Road south of Beach Street and on Narragansett Avenue from Beach Street to Caswell Street
2. Secure shared-lot parking agreements and leases with private parking lot owners to support the growing parking permit program
3. Increase marketing, promotion, and wayfinding to the Pier Area Shuttle Lot

It was anticipated that the revenue stream provided from the proposed waterfront paid parking could potentially underwrite the costs of the entire parking program including off-street parking leases/agreements, parking equipment and the Pier Area Shuttle itself. However, none of the three recommendations were acted upon by the Town and in 2017, the Pier Area Shuttle was discontinued - due in part to the reported high cost of insurance. Concerns were also raised with respect to installing multi-space parking kiosks on Ocean Road due to aesthetic concerns and the desire by some to maintain free on-street parking in Narragansett.

Current Parking Regulations

Off-Street Beach Parking Areas: The primary parking generator in the Pier Area during the peak summer season is Narragansett Town Beach, which has over 19 acres of beachfront area. The beach is fully open weekends from Memorial Day weekend through the first week in June and then daily through Labor Day. The 2021 beach admission fee is \$12 per person, free for children 11 and under. The beach is served by over 1,000 town-owned, off-street parking spaces located adjacent to the beach on both sides of Boston Neck Road. Beach parking is available on a first-come, first-served basis in the adjacent South, North, West and Cabana Lots. 2021 parking fees were a flat \$10/vehicle Mondays through Fridays and \$15/vehicle on weekends and holidays. Discounted seasonal beach passes for residents are also available. Visitor beach admission and parking rates were increased in 2020 to address beach overcrowding that was reportedly making the beach less resident-friendly.



On-Street Parking Time Limits: Public parking in the broader Pier Area surrounding Narragansett Town Beach is free of charge. The Town regulates on-street parking use in some locations around Pier Area businesses, the fire station/library on Caswell Street, and the Post Office on Kingstown Road using time limits (2-hrs., 1-hr., and 12 minutes, respectively). Time-restricted parking is generally in effect from May 15th to September 15th, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., daily. The 2-hour time-zone is primarily limited to streets in the immediate vicinity of businesses on and around Kingstown Road and Narragansett Avenue. There are no time limits for free parking along Ocean Road, the Boon Area business district or on residential streets, although some residential streets have permit



parking-only restrictions. A town map depicting *Pier Area parking regulations by Ordinance including No Parking Zones, Time Restricted Zones, and Permit Parking Only Streets* is attached as **Exhibit A**.

On-Street Permit Parking Program: A Parking Permit Program is administered by the Town Clerk for Pier Area residents, rental owners, and commercial businesses. Parking permits are issued by the Narragansett Municipal Court to allow eligible individuals to park on permit-only restricted streets from May 15th to September 15th, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Year-round parking permits are available to residents of Narragansett Avenue to allow them to park overnight on an overnight-restricted section of Narragansett Avenue from Caswell St. to Strathmore St. All parking permits are issued free of charge.



Permit stickers are issued to residents, including non-seasonal rentals, for parking on the permit-restricted street they reside on. Resident guest passes are not issued. Permit hangtags are issued to landlords for short-term tenants (leases less than 6 months) and to business owners for employees. The employee hangtags are issued to the business owner and can be shared by employees based on documented work shifts. Employees can park on any permit-restricted street but are encouraged by the Municipal Court to park on non-residential, permit-only streets. An employee hangtag does not allow an employee to park in the 2-hour time-restricted zone exempt from the 2-hour time limit. The *Town's parking permit eligibility rules and requirements* are attached as **Exhibit B**.



The Town Clerk's office reported that there were 892 total parking permits issued in 2021 as follows:

2021 Parking Permit Issuance

Resident sticker parking permits	663
Rental property hangtag parking permits	176
<u>Business hangtag parking permits for employees</u>	<u>53</u>
Total parking permits issued	892

Parking Enforcement/Fines: Most parking fine amounts as established by Town Ordinance (Section 74-4), are \$50 – including overtime parking violations and for parking in a prohibited area. The only parking violations above \$50 are for parking in a tow-away zone (\$75) and unauthorized parking in a handicapped space (\$100 for first offense). In 2019, the Town issued 2,067 overtime parking citations, which is indicative of an active time-zone monitoring/enforcement program. The Town Police Department hires uniformed Community Service Officers (CSOs) on a seasonal basis through college internships to enforce the parking rules and regulations and provide information and assistance to visitors. The CSOs monitor the parking time zones and issue handwritten parking tickets. In 2021, the Town hired 18 CSOs during the summer season. The CSOs provide a very visible and important role in the day-to-day management of Pier Area parking and during special events.

Potential Development Impacts

Pier Marketplace Redevelopment: While several relatively small residential redevelopment and rehabilitation projects are planned or underway in the study area, it is a municipal project – a new public library in the Pier Marketplace, that has the potential to impact Pier area parking in the near term. The Town has contracted the design for converting the former Belmont Market Building in the Pier Marketplace into a new, larger (20,000+ sf) library to replace the existing, undersized (8,800 sf) Maury Loontjens Memorial Library at 35 Kingstown Road. The former Belmont Market Building purchase comes with 60+ off-street parking spaces while the existing library has just 18 spaces. The project is scheduled to be bid this winter, constructed, and opened by early 2023.

While the former Belmont Market Building will provide substantial off-street parking for the future library use there, it is the Maury Loontjens Memorial Library re-use that could impact on-street parking – particularly on Kingstown Road and Caswell Street. The disposition of the existing library is not yet known. If the property is sold by the Town and rezoned for a more impactful use with respect to parking, say restaurant use, it would likely be unable to satisfy its parking requirements with the existing small parking lot. In any case, impacts to the existing high-demand on-street parking on Kingstown Road and on Caswell Street should be assessed once a redevelopment plan for the existing library is known.

Boon Street Shops Area Redevelopment: Several commercial redevelopment projects are in design or construction in the Boon Street Shops Area. The Narragansett Pier Railroad Station Renovation at 145 Boon Street is currently in construction. The renovation to the 7,500 square foot former railroad station, with plans to include first floor retail and second floor residential use, is supported by a large parking lot and landscaped area. There is also a 20-room boutique hotel proposed for 141 Boon Street, which is located at the corner of Boon Street and Continental Street. The proposed 3-floor hotel with a rooftop deck would be situated on an existing ½ acre lot with frontage on Boon Street. The former Presbyterian Church at 114 Boon Street is also planned for renovation and conversion to a small number of multi-family residential units with off-street parking. There is also a small 4-room hotel planned for the former Marco’s Restaurant site at the corner of Boon and Rodman Streets. These redevelopment projects signal a continued interest in reinvestment in the Boon St. area that should increase area parking demand in the near term.

Town Staff Interviews, Recent News Articles and Correspondence

Interviews were conducted with Town Manager Jim Tierney, Chief of Police Sean Corrigan, Town Clerk Janet Tarro, and Community Development Director Mike DeLuca to discuss parking operational issues/concerns, parking enforcement, permit parking, and parking planning, respectively. Recent newspaper articles as well as written correspondence to the Town on parking issues were also reviewed.

Town Manager Jim Tierney provided and discussed the written correspondence received by his office from concerned citizens and elected officials that included suggestions and ideas to improve parking in the Pier and Boon Street area. Written suggestions included implementing timed/paid parking along the seawall, re-instituting trolley service to remote lots, adding sidewalks and crosswalks to promote walking, and building a parking garage in character with the town.

Chief Corrigan provided an overview of the Community Service Officer intern program. He noted that the most parking complaints received by the Department are from residents complaining that employees are parking in front of their houses without permits. He also receives complaints of people parking in the Town Hall Lot on 5th Ave. He noted that the “parking problem” in Narragansett is really a summer seasonal issue except when URI students fill up rental properties increasing the number of cars on street. He added that the student rental issue primarily occurs in the off-summer season and is more prevalent in areas adjacent to Scarborough Beach than in the Pier area.

Town Clerk Janet Tarro provided an overview of the parking permit program, which includes resident permit stickers and rental property & business/employee hangtag permits. Since the hangtag permits are movable and potentially transferable, issuance is closely tracked to the number of (short-term rental) tenants per home rental (max 4 permits per property) and the number of employees by shift for business. The type of permit, street (if applicable), and rental property/business is written directly on each hangtag. Resident permit stickers are available to resident owners and long-term renters (lease of 6 months or longer). Daily or hourly residential guess passes/permits are not offered.

Community Development Director Mike DeLuca provided an inventory map of Town parking regulations (Exhibit A) developed by the Department after completion of the 2011 parking study and updated in 2019. He noted that Narragansett Town Beach is the major parking generator in the Pier Area of Town and that beach overcrowding (also referenced in newspaper articles) has been a significant issue in



recent years. The beach overcrowding is due in large part to its relatively small size in relation to beach demand and the available supply of off-street and on-street parking. He noted that in addition to the adjacent beach parking lots, there are roughly 240 free, all-day, on-street parking spaces along the 1-mile seawall section of Ocean Road, and by 8:15 a.m. or so on a non-raining day, there are often over 100 cars already parked on the seawall – many of whom are headed to the beach. He believes that the seawall parking is contributing to beach overcrowding and adversely impacting both beach parking sales and retail business in the Pier Area.

Mr. DeLuca suggested that time-restricted parking (with appropriate time limits to be determined) could be designated on Ocean Road and on Narragansett Avenue between Ocean Road and Caswell Street to reduce beach parking impacts there while providing additional turnover parking for adjacent businesses. He suggested time-restricted on-street parking be implemented in the Boon Street business area as well to improve turnover/supply of customer parking.

A review of recent newspaper articles and correspondence received by the Town identified several suggestions to improve Pier area parking including:

- designating time-restricted and/or paid parking along the Ocean Road seawall

- purchasing additional land on and around Boon Street for surface parking
- re-instituting the Pier Area Shuttle (discontinued in 2017) to connect peripheral parking lots that could include elementary school, high school, and/or others, to the beach/business areas
- constructing an aesthetically pleasing parking garage that is appropriately sized and located. Some have suggested building a parking garage at the existing library site on Kingstown Road.

Field Investigations/Observations

Field investigations were conducted during the lunch-time peak parking period on Tuesday, July 13th and Saturday, September 11th, to observe parking conditions, operations, and performance. Both days were seasonably warm and sunny, and the beach appeared to be very well used. On-street parking occupancy levels on time-restricted, permit-only, and unregulated streets in the Pier area were observed and assessed. In general, parking occupancy levels appear to have increased somewhat from those observed in 2011, both within the 2-hour zone and along the Ocean Road seawall.

Time Zones: Except for Narragansett Ave. west of Robinson St., there was a lack of sufficient parking availability within the on-street 2-hour time zone observed through the lunch-time period both days. A lack of parking availability was also observed on both sides of Ocean Road from Beach St. to Central St. both days. In fact, at one point in the early afternoon Saturday, every parking stall except one was occupied on both sides of Ocean Road from Beach St. all the way to the block south of Central St. The 1-hr. parking spaces on Caswell St. in front of the Fire Department and Public Library were underutilized. The 12-min. parking spaces in front of the Post Office on Kingstown Rd. appeared to be adequately used.

Boon Street Shops Area Parking: Insufficient on-street parking availability was observed on Boon Street between Congdon St. and a point south of Rodman St. throughout the lunchtime period (depicted below left). While this unregulated on-street parking was nearly full, the adjacent commercial lots were significantly underutilized. In fact, on Saturday, Sept. 11th, the gravel parking lot at Boon St./Rodman St., which is signed for Crazy Burger employee parking, was completely empty (depicted below right).



Permit-Only Parking Streets: In general, the designated permit-only parking on residential streets was observed to be significantly underutilized – typically, under 50% occupied. The designated permit-only parking on Beach Street between Kingstown Road and Ocean Road (depicted below left) and on Caswell Street between Kingstown Road and Narragansett Avenue (depicted below right), were also significantly underutilized during lunch-time peak periods.



Analysis and Recommendations

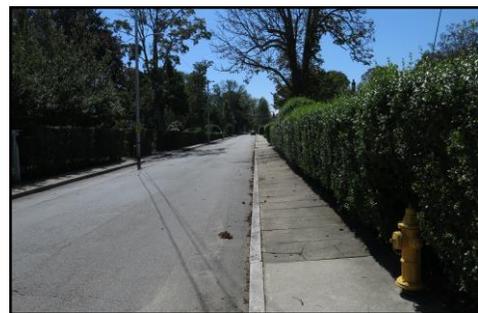
In consideration of the findings resulting from the data and document review, staff interviews, and field observations discussed above, the following parking strategies and actions are recommended.

- 1. Expand 2-hour on-street parking in the Pier Marketplace Area & Boon Street Shops Area** – A lack of available 2-hour parking during the lunch-time peak parking period supporting adjacent Pier Marketplace area businesses was observed on Kingstown Road, Mathewson Street and Memorial Square. The 2-hour parking on Narragansett Avenue closest to Caswell Street was also well used. Areas to consider expanding 2-hour parking (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) include:

- Caswell Street - Narragansett Avenue to Kingstown Road – the current permit-only and 1-hour parking on the west side of the street was observed to be poorly used (see photo on previous page) at the same time the nearby 2-hour zone was near capacity. One alternative strategy for Caswell St. would be to make it 2-hour time-restricted parking but allow permitholders to park there, exempt from the 2-hour limit. This is typically done in downtown areas on mixed business/residential streets as it usually results in more efficient use of limited on-street parking. The street sign depicted to the right reflects this kind of regulatory approach.



- Caswell Street – Kingstown Road to a point approximately 120 feet south – this permit-only residential side street to the Pier area business district was nearly empty (depicted at right) at the same time the nearby 2-hour zone was nearing capacity. On-street parking demand appears to be very low on the northerly end of this street segment where there are no driveways within the first 120 feet or so. 2-hour permit exempt parking, as described above, should be considered on the west side of Caswell Street from Kingstown Road in a southerly direction for about 120 feet or so, which would provide approximately five (5) striped 2-hour permit exempt spaces that would not appear to impact residential parking needs. In addition to



employees, the 2-hour time limit would also allow resident visitors, including: service contractors, home health aides, and other short-term visitors to park on-street.

➤ Beach Street – Ocean Road to Memorial Square - the current permit-only parking on Beach Street was observed to be poorly used at the same time the nearby 2-hour zone was nearing capacity. It is unusual for a commercial/non-residential street in a business district to be restricted for permit only parking. Again, to improve the efficient use of this street, and to supplement limited turnover parking to the businesses, it is recommended that it be converted to 2-hour, permit-exempt parking.

➤ Ocean Road – Beach Street to Memorial Square – this section of seawall parking is in close walking distance to the Pier Marketplace businesses, Kingstown Road businesses, the Towers, Coast Guard House/Restaurant, and the Chamber of Commerce. As such, it could provide a good source of needed 2-hour turnover parking. As it is, because of its proximity to the Narragansett Town Beach, the 36 unregulated, all-day, on-street parking spaces here are usually filled-to-capacity by early morning most summer days – many by beach goers seeking a free parking alternative to the beach lot. 2-hour time restricted parking would increase parking availability to customers of nearby coffee shops, restaurants, and business, and to Pier area visitors and those seeking to enjoy a walk along the seawall.

➤ Narragansett Avenue – Boston Neck Road to Wanda Street – it appears that the northerly side of Narragansett Avenue on this street segment is a no parking zone by Town Ordinance with perhaps a small area for a RIPTA bus stop. However, vehicles were observed parked along the northerly side (depicted at right). People parking there were observed walking to the Narragansett Town Beach. This walk is not much longer to the beach than some spaces in the paid beach lots off Boston Neck Road. It appears that shoulder widths are adequate to support time-restricted on-street parking on this side, which could support Pier Marketplace business and abutting resident use.



➤ Boon Street – Rodman Street to Congdon Street – as noted and depicted earlier, this section of Boon Street, which allows unregulated, all-day, on-street parking, was nearly full while at the same time, the abutting private commercial parking lots were significantly underutilized. Implementing 2-hour parking on Boon Street will reduce employees from parking in front of stores, increase parking space turnover for customers, and increase use of off-street parking in commercial lots. The 2-hour parking will also be beneficial as redevelopment projects in the corridor come online.

- 2. Consider implementing seasonal 3-hour parking on Ocean Road from Memorial Square to Central Street** - The combined 240 free, all-day, unrestricted parking spaces along Ocean Road between Beach Street and South Pier Road are effectively serving as free parking lots during the day for the beach/waterfront area. Beach goers that arrive very early in the morning to secure a space often stay all day. Those that arrive late end up circling and hunting for free spaces, which adds to traffic congestion.

As previously stated, it is recommended that the closest section of Ocean Road to the beach and the Pier Marketplace area businesses (Beach Street to Memorial Square) be designated 2-hour parking. The next section of Ocean Road between Memorial Square and Central Street, which is a longer walk to the beach and Pier Marketplace area businesses, could be designated 3-hour parking to discourage beach goers (given the time limitation and walk distance to the beach) from parking there. It would create more turnover and utility of parking spaces for customers of nearby restaurants and businesses. It would also provide ample time for residents and visitors who frequent the seawall sidewalks to take walks along this beautiful stretch of oceanfront. The Town has already established permit-only parking on nearby residential side streets such as Taylor Street, Central Street and Mathewson Street.

The Town could extend time limited parking on Ocean Road south of Central Street or leave it as it is today, without time limits, while it evaluates the performance and impacts of the proposed time restrictions north of Central Street.

- 3. Consider implementing seasonal paid parking in the existing and proposed time zones** - Many tourist-based, coastal communities in New England charge for parking in and near their waterfront areas simply because of the unusually high parking demand for these spaces and subsequent need for regulating their use. Enforcing timed parking through signage alone and physically chalking or noting license plates is extremely time consuming, labor intensive, and often costly. Metered parking results in better turnover & parking compliance with time limits than by posting and enforcing signs alone. Metered parking requires less parking enforcement personnel than signed parking and should result in fewer tickets issued to customers. It is also typically more effective at moving employees out of customer spaces. Customer intercept surveys also show that tourists expect to pay a reasonable parking fee for access to such high-demand areas.

Parking Rates, Revenue Reinvestment & Discounted User Groups: Many coastal communities rely on revenues generated from their high-demand waterfront parking areas to fund parking operations and improvements that may include expanding off-street parking for employees and longer-term parkers, upgrading sidewalks and lighting to parking areas, or funding transit/shuttles to reduce parking demand. Many of these communities provide deeply discounted or free permit parking to certain user groups that may include their residents, employees, business owners, fishermen, senior citizens, and others. The most prevalent short-term metered parking rate for streets abutting Atlantic Ocean beaches in New England is

\$2.00/hour. This hourly rate can be found on streets abutting beaches in Newport, RI, Plymouth, MA, Rockport, MA, Hampton Beach, NH and York Beach, ME. The payback at this hourly rate for the purchase and installation of new parking meter equipment as described below is typically less than 2 years.

Metered Parking Technology Options: Metered parking can be implemented using parking meters, multi-space payment kiosks, mobile parking apps, or some combination of the three. The use of multi-space parking kiosks along the Long Sands Beach Seawall in York, Maine is depicted in the photo at right. Solar powered, multi-space kiosks can be appropriately spaced along the roadway so that each kiosk controls payments a dozen or more parking spaces. These kiosks typically accept credit cards, debit cards and coins and can operate in a pay-by-plate, pay-by-space, or pay-and-display format. Some coastal communities have moved to contactless paid parking with no meters or kiosks – only posted signs that direct parkers to use a mobile app/phone to pay for parking as is done at the Galveston, Texas Seawall depicted below.



With a mobile payment application in pay-by-plate format, a parker simply enters a zone number posted on a nearby street sign into their phone/app, enters the amount of time they want to park, their license plate number & payment method (credit card, pre-paid card, PayPal, Apple Pay, etc.) and starts their parking session. The parking transaction is securely transmitted in real-time to reflect payment status to parking enforcement via wireless handheld units (see recommendation #5 below). The parker will receive a text message typically 10 or 15 minutes prior to expiration asking them if they would like to extend their parking session, which they can do remotely using their phone provided they are not exceeding posted time limits. The mobile pay app, like the parking kiosk, will not allow parkers to extend parking beyond posted time limits. Parkers that do not have a smart phone or are uncomfortable using mobile apps can still call a toll-free number on the posted sign to secure their parking in the manner above using a credit card.

Time-Restricted, Paid Parking Option along Seawall: With 2- and 3-hour time-restricted paid parking, Narragansett could greatly reduce the number of beach goers parking along the seawall. As previously noted, the parking kiosks & mobile pay app could be programmed to not allow parkers to add time to their meter beyond posted time periods along the seawall. They could also be programmed to not accept payments from parkers who simply move their car to another space along the seawall zone to skirt the time limits and park all day. At the same time,

they could be programmed to provide free or discounted customer parking to nearby restaurants by electronic validation, and free or discounted resident parking by license plate permit.

Progressive Pricing Option w/no time limits along Seawall: Some communities are considering eliminating parking time limits altogether in high-demand parking zones like the Narragansett seawall in favor of using progressive meter rates. With progressive meter rates and no time limits, the meter rate increases the longer the parking session goes on. Just as an example, the meter rate could be set at \$2/hour for the first 2-hours to accommodate short-term visitors and customers of nearby downtown businesses, and then ramp up to say, \$4/hour for the 3rd hour with potential reduced-rate/free customer parking validation offered at nearby restaurants. If nearby beach parking lot flat daily rates are \$15, the fourth hour of seawall on-street parking could again be increased to an \$8/hour rate so that the cost of four hours of seawall parking (\$16) would exceed the nearby beach parking lot rate, which would likely dissuade most beach goers from using the street parking for beach use if so desired by the Town. With the elimination of time limits, the need for tire chalking enforcement is eliminated along with overtime citations to visitors.

- 4. Seek to secure shared-lot parking agreements and/or the lease/purchase of lots/parcels for developing off-street surface parking within a 5-min. walk of the Pier Marketplace and Boon Street business areas** – Narragansett is somewhat unique in that it has no general use public parking lots supporting the business district. It is recommended that the Town seek opportunities for securing shared-lot agreements or leases to allow public off-street parking – particularly to support employee permit parking to get employee vehicles off the street. Shared use of church parking lots during the week, professional office building lots on weekends, the lease/acquisition of vacant lots, and/or purchase of a parcel for developing a well-located parking lot could also be considered.

- 5. Replace handwritten tickets and manual “chalking” with electronic handheld ticketing devices** -

The town should consider eliminating handwritten tickets in favor of more efficient electronic handheld ticketing devices with electronic chalking, photo, and license plate look-up capabilities. These devices eliminate the manually intensive task of chalking car tires and keying citation data into the parking citation management system. From the moment the citation is issued, that data is available to the system via wireless transmission and download. It is a proven technology that improves ticket accuracy, tracking and reporting, and reduces parking appeals. Most importantly it can be wirelessly integrated with any future paid parking system and “smart” permit system, should the town ever decide to replace its sticker and hangtag permit system with a license-based permit parking system, where the license plate is the permit.



EXHIBIT A: Current Pier Area Parking Regulations Map

EXHIBIT B: Parking Permit Eligibility Rules & Requirements