

Committee to study Fernandina Beach parking

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Does Fernandina Beach's downtown have a parking problem?

Though City Manager Dale Martin does not believe there is a lack of spaces, he has tasked a new committee with finding out.

"It became apparent from several of the previous (city) meetings that parking is on people's minds and before anything moves forward – Alachua, the waterfront, the marina – the key component is understanding the needs related to parking," Martin explained during a phone interview Monday.

"Some people say there is a parking problem? How do we find that problem? Are there enough spots? Is it a conve-

nience issue?" he said. "Until we could come to a commonality of terms, we're always going to be dancing around the edges."

Martin tapped internal staff for the committee's initial membership.

"I thought some of the best ones were (Police) Chief (Jim) Hurley, who's been a key player in the past, (Fleet and Facilities Director Jeremiah) Glisson, (Kelly) Gibson as senior planner, Rex (Lester, Streets and Parks director) because of his longtime knowledge, and (Stormwater Director) Andre (Desilet) because of his engineering knowledge," he said.

But Martin added that the committee members could choose to add members of the community if they saw fit.

"I want to take a hands-off approach,

so it doesn't look like it's a political process. I'm not going to tell them put these people on, don't put these people on," he explained.

Martin said one of the committee's tasks is to review the handful of parking studies that have been commissioned by the city over the years and provide a comprehensive update for the City Commission as well as some recommendations.

You can view those studies online:

- 2002 Parking Study, bit.ly/2rdgaMB
- 2009 Parking Study, bit.ly/2qcwvgw
- 2010 Paid Parking Workshop, bit.ly/2rPoOgC (PowerPoint presentation)
- 2014 Parking Study, bit.ly/2rwT6If (PowerPoint presentation)

PARKING Continued on 5A



CITY OF FERNANDINA BEACH/SPECIAL

Could signs like this be coming to Fernandina Beach's downtown? City Manager Dale Martin has asked an internal committee to review and update parking options.



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Previous parking studies commissioned by the city have raised the idea of using a kiosk-style paid parking system, an option that has become popular in many cities.

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In March, Martin told the Men's Newcomers Club that "there is not a parking problem downtown," according to a *News-Leader* report, and that they should not worry about overcrowding because of the then-proposed increase in residential density in the Central Business District from eight to 34 units per acre. That increase passed last month.

"I have never been unable to find a parking spot downtown," Martin said in response to a question during the club's March 16 meeting. "I may have had to walk a block or two, but that doesn't make a problem."

Martin has set a deadline of

Aug. 1 for the committee to complete its work and make a presentation to city commissioners at their regular meeting that evening. He said that schedule would work hand in hand with work to be done by Dix.Hite in developing a redevelopment plan for the waterfront.

"The goal is to provide some info to the (commissioners) so they can make political decisions that in the past have not been easy," Martin explained.

"Do we want to look at paid parking? That was one of their goals from the visioning session ... Is that one of those political hot potatoes? Do you have the political will in making these decisions?" he said.

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