

# Pay Parking in the Des Moines Marina and Beach Park

FOR ALMOST 50 YEARS THE DES MOINES MARINA has provided access to the Puget Sound for countless numbers of residents and visitors for a wide variety of uses. Boating and special events like the 4th of July Fireworks Over Des Moines and the Des Moines Waterfront Farmers Market are certainly the most visible activities but many people come to the Marina to walk along the promenade and the Des Moines Creek Trail, play on the beach or to fish from the Public Fishing Pier. Many things have changed in our society since the Marina opened in 1970 but one thing has remained constant: the demand for public access to the waters and shoreline of the Puget Sound.

In order to meet this demand, the City Council and staff have been carefully constructing a plan to ensure that the Marina will be able to sustain itself for future generations. When the City built the Marina it was set up as an "enterprise fund" which meant that the revenues from the moorage fees, fuel sales and other services provided to boaters were expected to cover all of the Marina expenses, including wages and debt payments. Fortunately, the Marina was an immediate financial success and has remained so until recently. No City taxes are used to pay for the operation of the Marina. The Marina has not only paid all of its expenses and debt service, but over the years Marina revenues have helped support the general operations of the City.

About four years ago, as our region and the country began to emerge from the worst recession in a generation, it became apparent that recreational boating in the Puget Sound, like in the rest of the country, was experiencing a significant decline. As a result, the City is no longer able to depend on revenues from the existing Marina enterprises to pay all the operating expenses. Also, to start replacing some of the major assets like the floating docks and the bulkheads, it will be necessary to take on debt, further taxing revenues. At that time the City's leaders began discussing other possible revenue sources in the Marina, including some commercial development and charging for parking in the Marina and Beach Park.

Early on in the discussions the Marina staff began a series of surveys to determine the demand for parking and

extent of the "market area" (or where do the people who use the Marina and Beach Park for non-boating activities come from). As expected, the surveys showed that parking demand was seasonal, but surprisingly strong during the off-season when the weather was good. The surveys also showed that the Marina and Beach Park are truly regional facilities with over 70% of the non-boating visitors coming from outside the City.

The data also lead to the conclusion that, for the future, it would be more equitable to develop new revenue streams based on user fees rather than taxes, because so many of the "users" come from outside the City. In early 2016 the City Council approved staff's proposal to install a pay parking system in the Marina and Beach Park. After a year of investigation and planning, staff is now in the process of installing the system, with a target operational date early in April. City staff is in the process of surveying other regional facilities to develop the fees for parking and are planning on offering an access card to Des Moines Residents for an annual fee, similar to the program the State Parks have.

Last October, the City staff began meeting with Marina tenants and neighbors to discuss the implementation

of pay parking. The meetings will continue to be held on the third Wednesday of each month, starting at 5:30 PM. To engage the broader community, the meetings have been moved to the Activity Center located at 2045 S 216th Street and will continue



Photo caption...

thru May or longer as needed to provide a forum for working out any problems that develop during the startup of the new system. The City encourages any interested parties to attend the meetings.

The City of Des Moines owns and operates two of the five waterfront facilities that provide public access to the Puget Sound for South King County's more than 500,000 residents. Sustaining and improving these facilities will remain one of the City's top priorities.



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