

STUDY SESSION
Parking Meter Presentation
CITY HALL, Fifth Floor
6801 Delmar Blvd., University City, Missouri 63130
Monday, March 10, 2025
6:00 p.m.

AGENDA

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

At the Study Session of the City Council of University City held on Monday, March 10, 2025, Mayor Terry Crow, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

In addition to the Mayor, the following members of Council were present:

Councilmember Stacy Clay
Councilmember John Tieman
Councilmember Steven McMahon
Councilmember Lisa Brenner
Councilmember Dennis Fuller
Councilmember Bwayne Smotherson

Also in attendance were City Manager, Gregory Rose; City Attorney, John Mulligan, Jr., and Communications Manager, Jared Jones.

2. CHANGES TO REGULAR AGENDA

None

3. PARKING METER PRESENTATION

Mr. Rose stated there is a desire to modernize the City's parking system to improve the user experience and enhance the ability to collect funds. Communications Manager, Jared Jones researched some of the viable parking meter systems, and tonight he will provide Council with a presentation on his findings.

Mr. Jones stated that he will be presenting Council with a recommendation for upgrading the City's parking system through the implementation of a Flowbird Parking System.

Introduction

The goal is to modernize University City's parking system to improve user experience, reduce maintenance costs, and increase revenue while ensuring a seamless transition for the community.

This can be achieved by streamlining parking operations and implementing user-friendly and cost-effective solutions which in turn, will increase revenue.

Current Parking Meter Status

The existing system consists of traditional coin-based parking meters.

- Total meters citywide: 322
- Meters needing replacement: 133 (41%)
- Some meters are blocked by restaurant barricades

Many of these meters are outdated, leading to frequent maintenance issues and ineffective user experience.

Current Challenges

- Meters blocked by outdoor dining spaces
- Coin collection process is outdated/inefficient
- Challenges with battery failure/physical damage
- Manual collection of coins deemed unsafe and labor-intensive
- High maintenance costs and outdated technology
- Reduced parking revenue due to inefficiencies
- Need for a user-friendly, cost-effective solution

Revenue Trends

| Parking Meter Collection | Fiscal Year | Amount |
|--------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | 2019 | \$140,560.21 |
| | 2020 | \$97,545.46 |
| | 2021 | \$20,023.04* |
| | 2022 | \$7,198.29 |
| | 2023 | \$3,917.02 |

| Parking Garage Fund | Fiscal Year | Amount |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 2019 | \$9,988.75 |
| | 2020 | \$7,485.34 |
| | 2021 | \$1,467.77* |
| | 2022 | \$1,288.84 |
| | 2023 | \$1,475.65 |

*** 2021 revenue was waived due to COVID**

Parking revenue has seen fluctuations due to inefficient collection methods and outdated technology. Neighboring cities that have transitioned to digital parking solutions have seen revenue increases.

Potential Solutions/Recommendations

- Coined Meter Replacements
- Mobile Parking Applications
- Digital Pay Stations (Kiosks)

Coin Meter Replacements

- Duncan Parking: \$13,772.50 for 25 meters
- POM, Inc.: \$13,125 for 25 meters

While these options modernize coin-based meters, they do not provide the full benefits of digital parking systems.

Parking Applications

- Mobile Parking Applications
 - Passport
 - Park Mobile
- No physical meters required
- Users pay via mobile app or QR Code
- Low-cost implementation and maintenance
- The Passport System can only be set by utilizing parking zones and license plates.
 - Signage would be placed on street poles, on existing meters, etc. with a QR code and information on how to download the Passport App to pay for parking.

- Passport charges the user \$0.37 per transaction.
- Payment processing fees paid by the City: gateway fees are \$0.05/per transaction and merchant secure payment processing is 2.9% + \$0.25 per transaction
- Currently utilized in Clayton, MO, which saw a 17% increase in parking revenue from 2022 to 2023).

Digital Pay Stations (Kiosks)

- Flowbird Urban Intelligence is the leader in kiosk systems. The cost: \$69,600 for 12 kiosks.
 - Flowbird is provided by **Total Parking Solutions**. The cost: \$141,140 for Flowbird kiosk pay stations and a CWT pay station.

Benefits:

- Provides both digital and on-site payment options.
- Reduces reliance on physical meters while maintaining accessibility for those without mobile apps.

What is Flowbird

- Flowbird is a digital system that allows motorists to pay for parking using their mobile device or website.
- Provides enforcement personnel who patrol in real-time using handheld mobile devices that look up current records of valid parking payment transactions for vehicles.
- For users, it eliminates the need for physical receipts; they can, however, print a summary of their tickets via the Flowbird website.
- For U City, it would reduce maintenance costs associated with physical meters; provide real-time data for enforcement and revenue tracking and provide a convenience for the user with mobile payment options.

(A video of Flowbird was played for Council)

Mr. Rose asked if there was a website Council could visit to see the video? Mr. Jones; *(no audible response)*

Mr. Jones stated the system hits almost all of the City's target areas. For those who commute, the app is perfect. It shows you where parking availability is highest, allows you to receive smart notifications during your parking session, and uses GPS to automatically identify where you are parked. Registered license plates can be recalled, speeding up the payment processes. And if a driver does get a fine, they can walk to the kiosk and pay the fine there. For those who do not want to use the app, they can pay by card, cash, or a digital pay option.

Next Steps

1. Review and select a recommended solution.
2. Implement removal process of current parking meters.
3. Commence new parking solution.
4. Educate the public on new payment options.
5. Monitor performance and revenue changes.

Mr. Rose stated if it is the consensus of Council to move forward, he intends to place this item on a regular agenda with the estimated cost and a more detailed outline of the implementation strategy.

Councilmember Clay posed the following questions to Mr. Jones:

Q. It seems like enforcement would be a critical piece. Can you explain how this system is enforced to ensure that the appropriate fees are being paid?

A. As it relates to collection and enforcement, Passport provides enforcement personnel who patrol in real-time using handheld mobile devices; paid for by the City, that look up current records of valid parking payment transactions for vehicles. It pings the device to let them know when the time has expired and how many spots are available within each section. Based on Passport's satellite system, the City will be divided into zones and each time someone parks it pings the satellite system and lets the collection agent know what type of action has occurred.

Q What does enforcement look like for those who chose not to register through the app?

A. If the non-digital option is used with the kiosk it actually registers and tracks their license plate.

Q. Does this eliminate the need for someone to physically patrol the entire area to observe when someone's time has expired?

A. Not necessarily. Once someone exceeds their time limit by approximately 5 minutes, the agent responsible for that area will receive a ping on their device, but the customer will continue to be charged for that overage until any further action is taken.

Q. So, do you get a ticket, or do you continue to incur charges if you are on the digital app?

A. You would get a ticket.

Q. Can you explain the decline that has occurred within the past five years for parking meter collections?

A. The numbers were accumulated by statistical data based on revenue associated with the general funds collected from parking meters. Starting in FY2019 which had the highest monetary value, revenue started to dwindle as the situation with our parking meters got worse, and the costs to maintain them began increasing.

Councilmember Fuller asked Mr. Rose what meters did they anticipate replacing? Mr. Rose stated the intent is to replace all of the meters. The City has such an old system that the existing meters will continue to break and it's becoming more expensive to repair them. There is also a desire to remove the existing street seating. Mr. Rose stated staff decided to bring this issue to Council's attention because they believed it was timely, and that it would help the City achieve the revenue it once had in 2019.

Mayor Crow asked Mr. Jones if any neighboring cities used Flowbird? Mr. Jones stated not at this time. U City would be the first in the City of St. Louis to utilize it.

Mayor Crow asked if staff would be making a recommendation tonight? Mr. Rose stated that tonight, staff is simply providing Council with direction. Mayor Crow stated that he does not necessarily want to be first, but if we already know that Passport works with no initial investment versus Flowbird which requires an outlay of \$140,000, that should make a big difference. So, while he can appreciate the ease associated with Flowbird's system, he's not certain that U City needs to be the guinea pig.

Councilmember McMahon posed the following questions to Mr. Jones:

Q. Is the City of St. Louis' Park Louie a rebrand of one of these systems or something different?

A. It is a different system.

Q. There's also Park Mobil, which the City of Clayton has, that I think, utilizes kiosks and zones similar to Passport. So, I assume that the only cash outlay for using Passport would be for the cost of signage.

What safety measures would need to be in place to ensure that fake QR codes that send patrons to malicious websites are not posted over Passport's QR codes?

A. Each zone will have its own QR code, and a Passport collection agent assigned to that zone will be responsible for ensuring their accuracy. Flowbird uses its system administrators to service an area.

Councilmember Brenner stated another cost associated with Passport is the transaction fees. Did staff do a cost analysis on what those transaction fees would look like for U City? Mr. Jones stated that no cost analysis was conducted for either system because the number of parking patrons for Passport compared to the number of patrons for Flowbird would be inconsistent. In comparison, parking patrons for the City of Clayton consist mainly of commuters, wherein the vast majority of U City's patrons would be residents.

Councilmember Clay posed the following questions to Mr. Jones:

Q. Does Passport's system have a kiosk feature associated with it, or is it just a mobile app that utilizes QR codes?

A. Passport is just a mobile app.

Q. So how would someone using coins pay for parking?

A. They would not be able to. However, Flowbird does provide that option.

Q. I believe that Clayton's system utilizes the kiosk option. So, is the suggestion that Council look at Passport without that option?

A. Passport's kiosk option almost doubles what you would pay for Flowbird.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Crow thanked Mr. Jones for his presentation and adjourned the Study Session at 6:26 p.m.

Kena Dean
Acting City Clerk

