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The power to build business

Hintonburg kudos for top city manager

By Roman Zakaluzny, Ottawa Business Journal Staff
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On the heels of last Wednesday's council decision to backtrack on tough new rules and fees for parking in city lots and at city-owned meters, some businesspeople want to give credit where credit is due.

Dennis Van Staalduinen, an official with the very new Wellington West Business Improvement Area (BIA), said were it not for a brave act by the city's top bureaucrat at Wednesday's city council meeting, businesses in the Wellington West area could possibly be losing customers due to proposed new stringent parking policies.

"Kent Kirkpatrick, the city manager, stood up in front of council on our behalf and admitted that it was a mistake to include Hintonburg in the (city's parking policy) in first place," Mr. Van Staalduinen told the i>OBJ. "This was a classy and courageous gesture, and the businesses and community are grateful, and a bit surprised, that he would put his neck out for us in such a public way."



Dennis Van Staalduinen, Leslie Turcotte and Michel Frojmovic. (Etienne Ranger, special to the OBJ)

The local BIA had argued that its area, which includes Hintonburg, is one of the poorest commercial areas in Ottawa, and had not yet reached a level of prosperity to merit the addition of pay meters on its streets.

"Lost in all the uproar about extended hours, days, and prices (for parking) was the story of Hintonburg: one of Ottawa's poorest neighbourhoods," he said, calling the timing "disastrous" and show a "criminal lack of planning or consideration."

While parking fees will increase by 50 cents to \$3 per hour as planned on March 1, council voted to put off the decision on the remainder of the unpopular plan, which included an additional 25-cent hike, putting parking meters in three new areas including Hintonburg, and extending metered hours to Saturdays and until 7 p.m.

Downtown business groups, churches and community groups had protested the ideas vigorously. This led the city's transportation committee to cancel the Sunday parking plans and shorten the proposed metered hours, but the committee also approved a plan tacking on an additional 25 cents to the previous hourly increase.

Wednesday's decision gave critics of the parking plan, city councillors and staff time to prepare new suggestions to make up the approximately \$3.5 million in lost revenues, with groups presenting their ideas to council on March 26.

The BIA will also be holding its first annual general meeting Feb. 19 at 7:30 p.m. at the Tom Brown Arena to elect a board and to approve a constitution and budget. Visit the Wellington West BIA website for more information.

