

New Bedford Parking Revenue is Booming



by
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Have you gotten a parking ticket in New Bedford this year? If you've visited downtown New Bedford or other areas with parking meters, chances are you've gotten several. According to *The Standard Times*, *the city raised over \$1.2 million from parking tickets, and meter and garage fees during the fiscal year that ends June 30, Traffic Commissioner Scott Downing told the City Council at a budget hearing Monday night. In fiscal 2011, the city raised \$1 million, up from \$685,092 in 2010 and \$276,380 in 2006.*

What that translates into is a **four-fold increase from 2006 (\$276,380) to 2012 (\$1.2 million)**. In just one year (from 2011 to 2012) the revenue increased by 20% from \$1 million to \$1.2 million. These statistics show that it is impossible to argue that the city doesn't have an aggressive ticketing policy. As someone that has lived in downtown New Bedford going on four years, I've personally noticed the army of meter maids increase in numbers and urgency to give tickets.



The negatives from this aggressive ticketing policy is obvious. First, visitors to commercial districts of New Bedford get a bad taste in their mouth if they come to grab a meal or drink, visit an attraction like the Ocean Explorium, or shop at a local retail. The impact is more revenue for the City and less revenue for local business. Second, people are reporting overly aggressive behavior from meter maids. I've experienced and heard hundreds of reports of tickets within seconds and minutes of meters expiring. Are they hovering over nearly expired meters? Basically, it comes down to the negative feeling towards New Bedford that this aggressive approach to enforcement brings. Instead of enjoying your visit to the City of New Bedford, you are constantly thinking about your meter and if you are going to get your ticket. As a visitor, you know that if you are seconds late, you may have a ticket. Third, a simple \$10 ticket can turn into a \$50+ ticket within months of not paying. The City starts to completely hammer you if you don't pay your ticket within a few weeks and likely accounts for a large portion of the \$1.2 million in 2012 revenue. Finally, the City doesn't even enforce their own policy that is printed on the meters. You can read my [Exposing New Bedford's Parking Meters](#) article to see that they don't monitor the meters past 5pm on week days, and don't work on Saturdays even though it states they do on the meters.

To be fair to Mayor Mitchell, this aggressive meter enforcement was established in 2006 by the Lang administration. Mayor Lang obviously saw a way to increase revenue through an aggressive ticketing policy. Some solutions would be to allow a 15-minute grace period, provide friendly warnings (happens all the time with speeding tickets)

and increase the amount of periods of free parking holidays. These suggestions would be a great start in reversing the negative feelings towards visiting our commercial districts.

There is a meeting tonight at 7pm (Thursday, June 21st) at the City Hall for local businesses and concerned citizens to voice their opinion. It's a first step and long over do. In a terrible economy, the city should be welcoming people to our city to boost our local economy, not the city's coffers. Also, an overly aggressive parking enforcement combined with high crime, a highly visible homeless population on our streets, doesn't help drive tourism to our city. The city can't fix crime and homelessness overnight, but they can reverse the overly aggressive parking enforcement immediately.

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