Fall 2013 Report
Parking Appeals Board–George Mason University Student Government

Michael Lagana, Chairman
Sarah Shanoudy, Associate Member
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ABSTRACT
The contents of this report summarize frequent violation areas, appeals data from summer through fall, concerns from students, and recommendations based on complaints and observations.
### Appeals Data

#### STUDENTS SEMESTER HEARING REPORT BY CATEGORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Approved</th>
<th>Denied</th>
<th>Downgraded</th>
<th>Sub-Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Courtesy: Parking Services

### Frequent Violations

#### Disabled Areas:
The Board has encountered several appellants who appealed citations for violating disabled parking areas. Such a violation on campus carries a $375.00 fine, which falls between the $100 to $500 fine limits set by the code of Virginia. Unless appellants demonstrated a flippant disregard for disabled signage or had a record of committing such violations in the past, the Board usually reduced the fine to the minimum proscribed by state law $100.00.

#### No Valid Permit in General Lots:
Since Parking Services stopped selling general lot permits in September, a few students appealed tickets they received for parking in general lots without permits. Despite that it is against regulations to park in general lots without a valid permit, a few appellants proceeded to park in those lots anyway. Most citations for this type of violation were denied or reduced unless the appellant was already a permit holder and could provide proof of permit.

### Student Concerns:

#### Parking Services Staff are Rude/Give Bad Information
A few students claimed that parking staff members were rude to them in the course of writing citations for committing parking violations. In addition, some appellants claimed that—during special events or the first week of the semester—parking staff told them that they could park in areas where they would not normally be allowed to park. Appellants would then receive a citation for violating the restrictions in the lot and claim that parking staff told them that they were allowed to park there. Although there was no way to independently verify such concerns, (since appellants did not note the name of the employee that gave them erroneous information) the board nonetheless noted their complaints.
• **Not Enough Parking in General Lots**
A few appellants who received "restricted area" violations (parking in an area other than designated by the parking permit) claimed that they spent large amounts of time searching for parking in general lots, and that they parked in restricted areas out of exasperation or because they would be late for class if they continued their search. The Board noted their concerns.

• **Communication Problems with Website and Parking Staff Saying Two Different Things**
One student approached the Chairman of the Board to express his concerns regarding language differences between what is on the website and what Parking Services staff told him. This student had misplaced his permit and was trying to obtain a replacement. After reading the information contained on the website parking.gmu.edu regarding lost permits, he thought he was aware that whether or not a permit replacement fee is charged would be at the discretion of parking services. He emailed parking services only to find that he was incorrect, and that parking services does not have that discretion. The Board notes his concerns and has suggested an improvement for the website in the following section of the report.

• **Student Government and Parking Services: "What Do You Want?" Wednesday**
Student Government and Parking Services collaborated to sponsor "What Do You Want?" Wednesday for the month of October. Student Government collaborated with Parking and Transportation Director Josh Cantor and elicited student feedback on Parking Services. We received the following information from students:
  • Free visitor parking: On campus students who have visitors must instruct their visitors to use the visitor parking areas in one of the three decks on campus (Mason Pond, Shenandoah, or Rappahannock).
  • Increase the number of parking spaces on campus: Some students complained about a lack of availability of parking on campus
  • Better lighting in parking lots
  • Parking Policies are Unclear
  • More Buses to different places: Currently, there are no plans to expand more bus routes due to budgetary constraints. However, a new route was added in September to the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Burke Station. This shuttle runs Monday through Fridays.
  • Parking rates should be lowered
The Parking Appeals Board makes the following Service recommendations to Parking Services:

1.) Fix language on parking website to reflect actual fees charged for lost permits. Current language states the following:

**Replacement Fee** A replacement fee may be charged for the replacement of a lost permit. **Whether or not a replacement fee is required will be at the discretion of Parking Services.** See **APPENDIX A** for the current replacement rate. Refunds for replacement fees will be processed in cases where the lost permit is found and returned to Parking Services within 30 days.

-A student came to the Chairman with a case where he had lost his permit. This student was under the impression that the issuance fee would be at the discretion of Parking Services, which is according to language under the "Permits and Regulations" section of parking.gmu.edu. However, after writing to Parking Services, he was informed that it would not be possible to waive the fee unless the permit is found (see attached documentation provided by the student). The Parking Appeals Board requests that language on the website under the relevant section be changed to reflect language in University Policy 1108, which states the following:

**Lost Permit Replacement Fee** A replacement fee will be charged for the replacement of a lost permit. **Full refunds, less a $15 administrative fee, for replacement fees will be processed in cases where the lost permit is found and returned to Parking Services within 30 calendar days.**

-The Board also recommends that this same section of the website be revised to provide instructions to students/staff who require replacement permits. We suggest adding the following language:

" Permit holders must go to the Parking Services office at the Shenandoah Shuttle stop to obtain the replacement permit during normal business hours (M-F 8:30 AM to 7:00 PM)."

2.) The Parking Appeals Board recommends a reduction in the fee for a lost permit from $75.00 (annual) and $50.00 (semi-annual) to $30.00 for all permits. The Board does not recommend changing the second part of the existing policy whereby the permit holders only get their money back if they locate the lost permit.
a.) George Mason's permit replacement rates are currently $25.00 (summer), $50.00 (semi-annual), and $75.00 (annual). For comparison:
-Northern Virginia Community College: Must pay full permit rate b/c of sticker\(^1\)
-Marymount: $30.00 flat fee\(^2\)
-Georgetown University: $75.00\(^3\)
-UDC: $40.00\(^4\)

**Other State School Replacement Rates:**
-University of Mary Washington: $0.00\(^5\)
-University of Virginia: $20.00\(^6\)
-Virginia Commonwealth University: $25.00\(^7\)
-Virginia Tech: $20.00\(^8\)
-Old Dominion University: $23.00\(^9\)

3.) The Parking Appeals Board recommends increasing the appeals timeframe from five days to seven. We have received some feedback from students, mostly residents, expressing that they wished that they had some more time to appeal their citations. Some students do not go to their cars for three to four days at a time, and do not realize until they are notified that their vehicle has been cited. Some students have expressed that they were not notified of the citations until the third one. Thus, the Board feels as if a two-day increase in the amount of time students have to appeal would be appropriate. For comparison:

-Northern Virginia Community College: 15 calendar days\(^10\)
-Marymount: 7 calendar days\(^11\)
-Georgetown: 10 calendar days\(^12\)
-UDC: 30 calendar days (all appeals handled by the District of Columbia)\(^13\)

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\(^1\) [http://www.nvcc.edu/current-students/parking-services/fees-fines.pdf](http://www.nvcc.edu/current-students/parking-services/fees-fines.pdf)
\(^2\) [http://www.marymount.edu/studentLife/services/transportation/parking/permits.aspx](http://www.marymount.edu/studentLife/services/transportation/parking/permits.aspx)
\(^3\) [http://otm.georgetown.edu/index.cfm?fuse=parking](http://otm.georgetown.edu/index.cfm?fuse=parking)
\(^5\) [http://adminfinance.umw.edu/parking/students/decal-refunds-and-replacements/](http://adminfinance.umw.edu/parking/students/decal-refunds-and-replacements/)
\(^6\) [http://www.virginia.edu/parking/information/rates.html](http://www.virginia.edu/parking/information/rates.html)
\(^7\) [http://www.parking.vcu.edu/vcupark/faq.htm#Q19](http://www.parking.vcu.edu/vcupark/faq.htm#Q19)
\(^8\) [http://www.parking.vt.edu/permits.asp](http://www.parking.vt.edu/permits.asp)
\(^10\) [http://www.nvcc.edu/current-students/parking-services/fines-appeals/index.html](http://www.nvcc.edu/current-students/parking-services/fines-appeals/index.html)
\(^11\) [http://www.marymount.edu/studentLife/services/transportation/parking/violations.aspx](http://www.marymount.edu/studentLife/services/transportation/parking/violations.aspx)
\(^12\) [http://otm.georgetown.edu/index.cfm?fuse=rulesregs](http://otm.georgetown.edu/index.cfm?fuse=rulesregs)
\(^13\) [http://dmv.dc.gov/service/contest-parking-ticket](http://dmv.dc.gov/service/contest-parking-ticket)
Other State Schools:
- University of Mary Washington: 20 calendar days\textsuperscript{14}
- University of Virginia: 14 calendar days\textsuperscript{15}
- Virginia Commonwealth University: 15 calendar days\textsuperscript{16}
- Virginia Tech: 10 calendar days\textsuperscript{17}
- Old Dominion University: 7 business days\textsuperscript{18}

4.) The Parking Appeals Board recommends that the lines located in the Housing Staff/30-minute load/unload lot outside of Potomac Heights be repainted. The lines are faded, which may cause someone to receive a $25 fine for parking over unclear lines. See photos attached as Appendix I.

5) The Parking Appeals Board recommends that Parking Services change language on their website to indicate that certain violations are proscribed by state law and cannot be forgiven, but only reduced or denied if they appeal such violations, and in such cases the decision will be to the determination of the board. This will increase transparency with the student body.

\textsuperscript{14} http://adminfinance.umw.edu/parking/tickets-and-appeals/appeal-guidelines/
\textsuperscript{15} http://www.virginia.edu/parking/citations/hearings.html
\textsuperscript{16} http://www.parking.vcu.edu/vcupark/faq.htm#Q6
\textsuperscript{17} http://www.parking.vt.edu/tickets.asp
\textsuperscript{18} http://www.odu.edu/life/parking-and-transportation/parking/enforcement-citations/citations