

## In search of parking solution

BY JULIE LANE |STAFF WRITER

Before Greenport opts to create more parking or install meters, it needs to enforce existing rules, which could make additional parking unnecessary, a parking expert told a gathering of about 20 village officials and merchants.

"You need to enforce the rules; otherwise, you don't have any rules," said Michael Kodama of MK Planning Consultants in Burbank, Calif.

"We don't have our own police department and there's some give and take with enforcement," Mayor David Nyce told Mr. Kodama during the recent forum at the Third Street firehouse.

One solution, Mr. Kodama said, would be for the village to hire its own constable during the late spring, summer and early fall months, when parking in the downtown area is at a premium.

Southold Police Chief Carlisle Cochran said his officers do issue parking tickets in Greenport, as they do throughout the town. But they can't really patrol the 10-minute parking spots that exist in a few places in the village, he said.

Disagreeing with Mr. Kodama's conclusion, Chief Cochran said he doesn't think Greenport has enough parking during the season.

"It's like any little hamlet area -- there's not enough parking," he said.

As for creating more parking spaces to accommodate visitors while Greenport is "the flavor of the month," the mayor said the local taxpayers would be stuck with the bill if people stopped coming to the village. Creating new parking facilities that would be needed for only part of the year is expensive, Mr. Kodama agreed.

Before any municipality considers adding parking, it needs to assess several factors, he said. They include demand, location, time limits, pricing and supply of existing spaces.

"Parking is one of the most selfish things we do," Mr. Kodama said. Everyone vies for the parking spots closest to their destinations -- and that's bad for local businesses, he said.

"I want them out of the car, walking," the expert said. He even suggested the village try closing off Front and Main streets to parking one Sunday morning just to see how it works out for merchants. He predicted sales would escalate as a result of visitors' strolling and window shopping.

But the merchants themselves are part of the problem, admitted Mike Acebo, president of the Business Improvement District.

"Most of the merchants park all day in front of their businesses," he said. "It frustrates me. All we're doing is enticing people to come to somewhere they can't go," he said about the lack of parking at peak times of the year.

Mr. Acebo runs an hourly van from Brewer Yacht Yard into downtown Greenport for the convenience of

his customers and employees. He suggested other businesses might want to share a similar system.

Restaurateur Bill Claudio said his business created its own parking and during critical months hires someone to regulate use of the lot. Those parking at Claudio's receive a ticket good for a \$10 credit toward purchases in any of the Claudio businesses at the southern end of Main Street. But those who park there and don't patronize Claudio's pay a \$10 fee, he said.

"I have more parking than all the businesses in Greenport combined," Mr. Claudio said.

When employers and employees park downtown, they take spaces away from customers who should be given first preference, Mr. Kodama said. He suggested village merchants provide incentives to their employees to park outside the immediate downtown area and also move their own vehicles from Front and Main streets. Employees who receive a discount on merchandise for not using customer parking would be more inclined to cooperate, and merchants would see increased sales that would pay for the incentives, he said.

The village might also want to consider resident parking stickers linked to specific areas, but that would require approval from the New York State Legislature, Larry McAuliffe from the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council said.

The Transportation Council paid for Mr. Kodama to come to the North Fork, and Trustee Chris Kempner arranged his visit to Greenport. Trustee Mary Bess Phillips also was involved in arranging the four-hour forum that was hastily organized to give merchants a chance to hear about the parking problem and discuss potential solutions.

The two trustees led Mr. Kodama on a tour of the village earlier in the day to get a look at the parking situation. In the afternoon, he led forum attendees on a shorter walk on Front and Adams streets, pointing out some of the problems.

"I would highly recommend not copying anyone; you're unique," Mr. Kodama told the gathering.

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