

TESTIMONY OF  
AUGUSTA CITY MANAGER BILL BRIDGEO

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 1520,  
AN ACT TO TERMINATE  
THE AUGUSTA DOWNTOWN PARKING DISTRICT

MAY 7, 2021

Senator Baldacci/Representative Matlack, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government:

My name is Bill Bridgeo and I am the City Manager for our great Capital City. I appear before you today in support of L.D. 1520, An Act To Terminate The Augusta Downtown Parking District. The District was created by a special and private law in 1947 when life in our downtown was entirely different and the need for a separate state-chartered legal entity to manage parking in the heart of the city was the surest way to address competing, and sometimes conflicting, needs of local businesses, customers, and residents.

For many years, the District served its purpose admirably well, governed by a volunteer board appointed by Augusta's mayor and council and adequately funded by the parking revenues it generated. Over time however, things evolved in the downtown and that model began to be stressed, and in recent years, has pretty much failed completely. The pandemic of the past sixteen months has been the last straw for the financial viability of the District.

Two years ago, the District's trustees, in collaboration with City staff, commissioned a study of how best to proceed and that study recommended the termination of the District with its assets and liabilities reverting to the City.

The District's trustees have unanimously supported this action and Augusta City Government is prepared to assume the responsibilities of the District. We are currently exploring modern alternatives to parking regulation and enforcement in the downtown (likely some form of metering system) with enforcement to fall to the Augusta Police Department.

On a personal note, I will very much miss the Parking District. They've been a great group of community-spirited volunteers over the years. Their chair has also been responsible for adjudicating parking district disputes and I fear that duty will somehow fall to me if I'm not careful!

Our thanks to Senator Pouliot for sponsoring this bill and seeing it through the Legislative Council's post-cloture process.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have. Parking District Trustees Chair Tobias Parkhurst is also available to speak in favor of this bill, should you so desire.