

# Town Clerk discusses parking concerns

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It is with great pleasure that I introduce this new column to you, as I wholeheartedly believe in the importance of continuing to keep an open dialogue between you and me. In doing so, we can share ideas and, inevitably, build a better community. Since taking office last January, I have looked to the most effective ways to reach out to you: through e-mail, my blog and now, this newspaper. Each new column will focus on a particular issue concerning you, the residents of this great community, as you wind your way through all the bureaucracy out there. Our Founding Fathers created a federal and state government; more than 200 years later, we find ourselves with so many layers of government that it's often hard to figure out to whom we can turn. Let this column symbolize another avenue for ensuring my commitment to help restore faith in your government (while at the same time, relieving the headache of dealing with it). To begin, I would like to discuss a hot-button issue that has affected everyone in this town at some point: parking.

Growing up with lots of kids my age on a close-knit, dead-end street created many memories for us all — barbecues, playing ball and, of course, finding spots to hide for those infamous manhunt games. As we all grew older, our responsibilities changed, and now, as we return to our street that we once had so much room to play on, we find ourselves searching for just a little more room — to park, that is. I know it may sound strange, but if your street is anything like mine, this is an all-too-familiar problem. The amount of cars each family owns has doubled over the past 10 years. In fact, when looking at the issue on the national stage, more than 16.1 million new vehicles were sold in America in 2007 alone. This number impacts many, as our roads and highways are jam-packed on the morning commute, as consumers of our local businesses can't find a space to park while they shop and as our streets become even more crowded as the average household adds a car (or two).

As town clerk, I have seen both the downtown and the West Harrison areas of town plagued by parking problems. Commuters, residents, merchants and consumers all vie for the best spots in the smallest area of our community. Unfortunately, many have been ticketed because they exceed the designated two-hour parking limit; meanwhile, they are simply parking to frequent a local business or because they live on that street.

So what is the answer to this dilemma?

While visiting Charleston, S.C., this past summer, I discovered that the city had the same problem. I spoke to the assistant director of the city's parking operations and he informed me that Charleston's residential neighborhoods were being taken over by colleges and universities. As a result, the concept of parking zones was instituted throughout the city. Basically, if you live or work within a certain zone, you are then exempt from the metered parking time limit. I have spoken with colleagues on this issue and have been told that it is unconstitutional in New York State to have a parking pass for a public street. This is disappointing, because the residents of Harrison still suffer this problem on a daily basis, but I have not let this setback deter me from seeking a solution.

Continue the dialogue by letting me know about any solutions you may have, so that local businesses, residents and the Town of Harrison as a whole can get needed parking relief.