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Media Writing

2/10/2012

Extra Credit – Town Hall Meeting

MSUM held a special town hall meeting late last week to discuss a parking issue that led to over 130 cars being towed and a lot of angry students and residents in the area. Mark Altenburg and Heidi Durand were the members of council that were in attendance to discuss this issue. Both Heidi and Mark came to campus immediately to try and solve the issues within the current parking policy. They both agreed that the intention was never to tow cars or to be an inconvenience to the students, and they both have open ears to any suggestions brought forward by students and residents.

Of course a major concern for the students revolves around the whole money issue, and whether or not they will be getting their money back. If not a full refund then at least some sort of reimbursement of the $95 fine. Mark replied to this concern by telling the student that he will be making a motion Monday morning to have $54 of the fine refunded to the student. He came up with that number because based off the $95 fine, $54 is what the city makes, and he doesn’t believe that the city should be making a profit off of a student or residents misfortune. Heidi also stated that there had to have been some sort of miscommunication and she knows that no student at MSUM would knowingly park somewhere if they knew that their cars would be towed.

Students weren’t the only ones affected by this “miscommunication”. Home owners in the area also found themselves wandering outside wondering where their vehicles have gone. Apparently the council is working on some sort of Residential Parking Permit, thus allowing them to park on streets and avenues longer than the three hour window and not having to worry about parking tickets or being towed. As it sits right now, residents in Moorhead that do not have driveways must go to the Police Department, fill out some forms to have their names, cars, and address put on a list, and then they will be exempt from any future issues. Not only is that a lot of extra work but that setup hasn’t been working anyways. Again Mark mentioned that Monday morning he will be making motions to start solving this issue.

Currently Moorhead’s snow removal schedule runs from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Many students and even a few residents suggested changing this and creating an overnight snow removal schedule. Mark stated that the Moorhead Police Department went above and beyond to tag vehicles and warn them about being towed but after a couple hours those cars would be gone and their spots would be replaced with someone else’s car. He also stated that they will be looking into a new time to plow and that he understands that towing throughout the night could cause issues with residents that live in the area.

The major source of this miscommunication can be factored down to three major inconsistences between the brochures that were handed out, the Moorhead Police Department, and The Forum. All three of these had zero consistency about when the cleaning would be done. A couple citizens suggested a rotating schedule that would cover streets on certain days and then avenues on the other days. Also taking care of this in the overnight hours when the students aren’t around campus and the streets and avenues have far fewer vehicles on them. Mark suggested using temporary signs around campus in place where parking isn’t allowed. He also acknowledged that signs were placed in wrong areas and wrong was done on the cities part. Closing his statement by stating there also needs to be consistent communication between everybody to make sure the correct message gets put out.

Personally I think this problem can easily be solved by communicating with NDSU and other cities. Take a look at how everyone else deals with their winter plowing situations and implement a new policy a lot like theirs. To my knowledge, a lot of cities do their plowing overnight and everyone knows that. Where I come from you don’t park certain places on specific nights from October 1st to the end of March or else will be ticketed and the plow trucks will basically burry you. You learn pretty quickly where not to park during the winter months. I think Moorhead communicating with Fargo and using a policy similar to theirs would solve this issue in a hurry and if you break the rules than you pay the price.