

MAPM PRESS STATEMENT

The Georgetown parking meter project had its genesis in the 1990's when National Parking Systems (NPS) , a company headed by Mr Kamau Cush , presented a proposal for the metering of 2,386 parking spaces to the then City Council.

At that time the project did not find favour with the City's administrators.

The project resurfaced in 2015 gaining the support of the Council and when the City's leadership changed hands in 2016 it was quickly put on the front burner.

The new mayor was elected on April 1st ,2016 and by May 13th a contract between the M&CC and NPS had been signed.

In June 2016 , the Mayor Ms Patricia Chase Green , Town Clerk Mr Royston King , Councilor Mr Junior Garrett and Mr Oscar Clark visited Mexico City at the invitation of NPS and Smart City Solutions (SCS) who by this time had been named as a partner in the venture.

During this period , City Councilors ,who had not been informed about the purpose of Mayoral team's visit to Mexico, demanded to see a copy of the contract and Mr Sherod Duncan ,the then deputy Mayor, questioned the bona fides of Smart City Solutions saying that he could find no trace of them online.

Upon her return to Georgetown , the Mayor, at a press conference informed citizens that she had taken a deliberate decision to withhold the contract from scrutiny in order to "secure the investment."

In July 2016 the Ministry of Finance issued their review of the contract between the Mayor and City Council (M&CC) and Smart City Solutions which stated that , based on their assessment , there were grounds for the contract to be withdrawn.

They cited among other things a lack of a socio- economic cost benefit analysis and non -adherence to Government procurement requirements as their reasons for coming to this conclusion.

Notwithstanding the objections of the Ministry of Finance the M&CC proceeded with their arrangements to implement the project and by December 2016 had installed a number of meters in the city.

The M&CC also proceeded to draft new bylaws to accommodate the operation of a metered parking system in Georgetown , putting these before the Council for approval on December 13th ,2016.

Paid parking was scheduled to commence on January 23rd , but there was a last minute hitch when it was discovered just prior to this date that the subject Minister

had not yet signed off on the bylaws which is a legal requirement before these can take effect.

With the Minister of Communities' signature hurriedly affixed to the bylaws Smart City Solutions and the M&CC rolled out their project on Tuesday, January 24th, 2017.

That was two weeks ago and we have witnessed a resolve by the citizens to refrain from utilizing the metered spaces at all cost. The streets within the area designated as a metered zone remain noticeably free of parked vehicles since the meter programme has come into effect.

MAPM believes that this boycott of the metered spaces by the citizens is their spontaneous reaction to a number of issues, in connection with the implementation of the parking meter system, that appear to be wrong.

MAPM believes that there was no feasibility study done on the project prior to its implementation.

MAPM believes that there was no socio economic impact study done on the project prior to its implementation.

MAPM believes that the procurement regulations of both the M&CC and the GoG have been breached.

MAPM believes that the requisite due diligence by the M&CC on Smart City Solutions has not been done.

Intuitively MAPM, along with the rest of the citizenry, senses that something is amiss when the Mayor refuses to make the contract with SCS public.

Above and beyond all of this MAPM believes that the parking meter fees set by Smart City Solutions and the M&CC are exorbitant when viewed in light of the fact that a significant number of persons live and work in the metered zone and therefore need to park there for eight hours or more, every day of the week.

We feel that this situation will be further exacerbated when the programme is expanded into its second phase.

We have already seen the teachers come out successfully against parking meters outside schools, and by giving in to their demand for an exemption from payment while on the job, M&CC and Smart City Solutions have conceded that all day parking fees are beyond the means of the average public servant.

We go further than this by saying that for a person with an average take home salary of around \$112,000, the parking fee, based on a 9 hour day and a 5 day week, represents around 37% of their monthly take home pay.

Compare that to mid town Manhattan which is probably the most expensive parking zone in the USA where the monthly parking fee is around 13% of the average monthly salary.

Elsewhere in the USA we see figures closer to 5 and 6 %.

SCS cannot exempt one professional group from payment on economic grounds and ignore other groups of a similar financial status.

We believe that because there was no feasibility study done a whole range of issues have not been addressed .

For example no provision has been made for parking for the disabled . Are these persons expected to trek the relatively long distances to a meter, where, if in a wheelchair, they are barely able to operate the device?

Since the commencement of the programme we have seen numerous operational issues that attest to the inexperience and general disorganization of those implementing the parking meter system.

We have noted that the few persons who do wish to comply , despite the public being assured that an adequate PR campaign was carried out by SCS , are at a loss when trying to pay for parking.

We have noted that persons have been booted even though valid tickets have been displayed.

We have noted that even though VAT has been reduced to 14% , SCS still applies this at the old rate of 16%.

We have noted the discourteous, often belligerent manner in which the SCS operatives go about enforcing their system.

We strongly object to the fact that SCS continues to penalize citizens even though the bylaws that enable them to do so legally have not been gazetted and in fact , according to the Minister of State , are still under review by the Attorney General .

We strongly object to VAT being applied to penalties incurred through breaches of SCS's parking rules . It is our understanding that VAT is only applicable to goods and services.

We, the supporters of the "Movement Against Parking Meters", therefore object to the implementation of the parking meters in Georgetown on the following grounds inter alia:

- The lack of transparency of the process.
- The lack of adherence to the Public Procurement process.

- The lack of consultation with the people of Guyana .

We, the supporters of the “Movement Against Parking Meters”, request that the M&CC and the Government of Guyana disclose and make public the following documents related to the imposition of parking meters in Georgetown :

- The Feasibility Study.
- The Impact Study.
- All reports ,minutes etc from Stakeholders’ meetings held prior to the implementation of the parking meters.
- Evidence of the tendering process.

In the absence of any of the above then we, the supporters of the “Movement Against Parking Meters”, request that the M&CC and the Government of Guyana

- Revoke the current parking meter contract between the Smart City Solutions & M&CC.
- Implement a transparent process that involves all stakeholders with regard the introduction of a paid parking system.

In the event that the current contract between Smart City Solutions and M&CC is revoked and due process, with regard to consultations and tendering is carried out , then we, the supporters of the “Movement Against Parking Meters”, would be amenable to the following:

- A reduced parking fee that is affordable by all.
- Special considerations and/or exemptions for certain categories of persons ie residents , businesses, employees , public servants ,etc .

We, the supporters of the “Movement Against Parking Meters”, are committed to ensuring the adherence to due process by the M&CC with regard to the implementation of a paid parking system

MAPM
February 8, 2017