Health aides seek parking break

Workers want Waterbury City Hall to help
By Mike Patrick  Republican-American  Waterbury
July 2/14

— Home health-care workers who serve the disabled and elderly in downtown towers are being particularly hurt by the city center’s parking arrange-ments, advocates said.

Either they have to leave their needy charges to hurry back to the street to feed the meters, or are forced to pay a monthly parking garage fee that takes up much of their meager part-time, minimum-wage earnings. That’s why the Naugatuck Valley Project has appealed to the mayor’s office to help find a way to alleviate the burden.

“Out of five buildings (that health care workers visit), four do not have parking, and if they do, it’s three or four spots available,” said Elizabeth Rosa, community organizer for NVP, a coalition of church-es, unions and citizen groups.

“If you’re at Josephine Tow-ers and you’re at the parking meter, you’re going to be there two hours, and if you’re de-layed in going downstairs to put in more quarters, you get a ticket for $50 or your car gets towed away.”

More than 200 home health-care workers visit pa-tients in the downtown area between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Rosa said. Most of them make less than $9 an hour on a part-time basis, she said.

Parking garages can cost upwards of $75 to $85 per month, far too steep, she said, for what the workers are paid.

Mayoral aide Monroe Web-ster said the city is willing to work with NVP on a solution, although initial ideas proved unworkable.

“They initially asked we provide some type of parking passes for workers,” but the estimated number of them was too high, he said. “Obviously, our response was, We can’t give out that many passes; we just don’t have an ability to do that.”

The next idea, he said, is to get the health aides, NVP, city officials and garage own-ers to discuss a plan to per-haps provide parking at a lower cost. That meeting has not yet been scheduled.

Webster acknowledged that the city has an interest in helping the health-care work-ers, as their presence bene-fits downtown businesses.

“With the number of work-ers down there, we want to do whatever we can to accommo-date them and get those feet on the streets and sidewalks during their lunch times, so they can visit the businesses down there,” he said.

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