



Joseph M. Centorino, Inspector General

September 23, 2020

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission
FROM: Joseph Centorino, Inspector General

RE: Citywide and G Parking Permit Inspection Report
OIG No. 20-20

Executive Summary

Attached is the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) report regarding its inspection of the Parking Department's issuance of Citywide (CW) and G Parking Permits as of May 22, 2020. These two parking permits allow designated users to park, free of charge, at metered Miami Beach parking spaces and at restricted residential zones. Their primary difference is that G parking permits also allow the holders access to all City Garages using their City ID and they are entitled to park at any of the designated third floor reserved spaces in the City Hall Garage.

Upon analyzing the provided data from several Parking Department databases, it was determined that a total of 870 vehicles were issued either CW (780) or G (90) parking permits as of May 21, 2020. More specifically, the 780 CW parking permits were distributed as follows into the listed categories:

1. Boards and Committees (304) – issued to members who serve on any of the City's 38 different Boards and Committees
2. City Employees (269) – includes current City Officials (Mayor and Commissioners), City employees (excluding any in the Fire Department Employees category below), City contractors, and approved employees of the Miami Beach Visitor and Convention Authority, Miami Beach Housing Authority and Bass Museum
3. Fire Department Employees (159) – temporary parking permits issued to firefighters working at Fire Station #1 as of November 1, 2018 when their assigned parking lot was unusable due to an underground improvement project
4. Miscellaneous (45) - granted primarily to former City Officials (Mayors and Commissioners) and to non-City public officials during their tenure in office (County Commissioners, Clerk of Court, U.S. Representatives)
5. Special Master (3) – provided to Special Masters, who are representatives of the court appointed to hear Code Compliance, Fire and Building violations appeals

Based upon the results of OIG staff's testing, the following deficiencies were identified:

1. The Parking Department has no policies or procedures concerning the issuance of CW and G parking permits.
2. The Employee Parking Application form does not include a section to indicate the reason justifying the issuance of the desired parking permit.
3. Of the 304 CW permits issued to Board and Committee members, 33 were assigned to individuals that were not active members as of May 21, 2020. The total number of individuals was 31, as two individuals had two vehicles concurrently.
4. Four former City employees, one former temporary employee and one City contractor had an active CW or G parking permit after they had been terminated or their contract had expired. A fifth employee needs to be reclassified from a "City Employee" to a "Boards & Committee member" as she no longer works for the City but is a member of the Disability Access Committee.
5. 46 current City Officials and employees, excluding those in the Fire Department Employees' category, were issued two or more CW or G parking permits. Of these, 40 had two vehicles, five had three vehicles, and one had four vehicles, for a total of 100 vehicles.
6. Of the 159 CW parking permits issued to Fire Department employees, 114 individuals had one vehicle registered, 21 had two vehicles, and one had three vehicles. These permits were issued without completing the Employee Parking Application Form, which requires the City Manager's approval prior to issuance.
7. Seven former Fire Department employees had active CW permits issued to their vehicles, after their termination date.
8. Neither the City Clerk's Office, the Parking Department nor the Human Resources Department provided documentation indicating that former City Officials are to continue to receive one CW parking after their term of service expires, other than an unsigned 1992 Parking Department policy.
9. Three vehicles, one belonging to a former Mayor and two to former Commissioners, had active Miscellaneous-CW parking permits assigned to them although they had been deceased for up to five years.
10. One former Assistant City Manager was issued a lifetime Miscellaneous-CW parking permit upon retirement at the request of the City Manager, although no approved policy or procedure officially documents this privilege.

We would like to personally thank Parking, City Clerk, Fire and Human Resources Department staff for their cooperation and assistance provided during the completion of this report. Management responses can be found in Appendix A at the end of the report.

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TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission
FROM: Joseph M. Centorino, Inspector General

DATE: September 23, 2020
AUDIT: Citywide and G Parking Permit Inspection Report
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City of Miami Beach parking permits are available to designated individuals including City Officials, City employees, Board and Committee members, City contractors, approved employees of the Miami Beach Visitor and Convention Authority, Miami Beach Housing Authority and Bass Museum, as well as selected City, County and State Officials. Applicants may complete an Employee Parking Application form requesting one of the following types of parking permits:

- City Hall (CH) parking permit – allows vehicle access to the City Hall Garage. Employee City identification (ID) is required to enter and exit the garage. City employees are required to park on the third and above floors of the City Hall Garage in any available spaces not designated as handicap or G parking permit spaces (see below).
- Citywide (CW) parking permit – honored at metered parking spaces and at restricted residential zones. CW parking permit holders are also allowed access to the City Hall Garage using their City ID. CW parking permit holders are required to park on the third and above floors of the City Hall Garage in any available spaces not designated as handicap or G parking permit spaces (see below). A CW parking permit is not honored in areas where parking is prohibited.
- G parking permit – in addition to the parking rights honored by the CW, the holders of a G permit are also allowed access to all City garages using their City ID and are also entitled to park at any of the designated third floor reserved spaces in the City Hall Garage. A G parking permit is not honored in areas where parking is prohibited.

The license plate on each vehicle (including motorcycles) serves as the parking permit once it is introduced in a Parking Department database. To avoid any unnecessary enforcement actions, the Parking Department's records must reflect the most current and accurate information regarding the vehicle license plate for each permitted individual. Inaccurate and/or outdated vehicle information may lead to the issuance of parking citation(s) and/or the towing of a vehicle.

The permitting process starts with the individual's fully completed Employee Parking Application form, which must be approved by the Department Director indicating the type of parking permit requested. Further approval is needed by the City Manager for any individual requesting a CW or a G parking permit. Later, the Parking Department's Office Associate V will enable the permit by entering the information in a Parking Department database, based on the corresponding request and the necessary approvals. One exception noted is that the Office Associate V will be notified by email rather than through the Employee Parking Application form to issue a Miscellaneous CW (defined below) to an approved individual.

Lastly, the Employee Parking Application form clearly states *"Parking permit is to be used strictly during normal working hours and during the course of conducting City business. Abuse of this privilege may lead to revocation of the parking permit and/or disciplinary action."*

Upon inquiries it was determined that the Parking Department's Office Associate V annually sends a list of approved CW and G parking permits to City departments to verify that the information is current and correct. Any requested changes are to be in writing and contain the proper approvals to be processed. If the Parking Department is not notified of any needed changes, then the assigned departmental parking permits will remain in effect.

As expected, CW and especially G parking permits are very desirable, and their issuance should be closely scrutinized to help ensure that parking revenues are collected from non-qualified individuals. This practice has taken on added importance during the current pandemic as Parking Department revenues have decreased significantly and, as a result, staffing has been minimized. Consequently, Office of the Inspector General (OIG) staff focused their testing below on the issuance of CW and G parking permits and verification of compliance with adopted City Resolutions and other supporting documentation.

Access was requested and received from several Parking Department's databases, which listed such information as the names of the individuals that were issued the designated parking permits, their license plate numbers, etc. Upon analyzing the provided data, it was determined that a total of 870 vehicles were issued either CW (780) or G (90) parking permits as of May 21, 2020. More specifically, the 780 CW parking permits were distributed as follows into the listed categories:

1. Boards and Committees (304) – issued to members who serve on any of the City's 38 different Boards and Committees
2. City Employees (269) – includes current City Officials (Mayor and Commissioners), City employees (excluding any in the Fire Department Employees category below), City contractors, and approved employees of the Miami Beach Visitor and Convention Authority, Miami Beach Housing Authority and Bass Museum
3. Fire Department Employees (159) – temporary parking permits issued to firefighters working at Fire Station #1 as of November 1, 2018 when their assigned parking lot was unusable due to an underground improvement project
4. Miscellaneous (45) - granted primarily to former City Officials (Mayors and Commissioners) and to non-City public officials during their tenure in office (County Commissioners, Clerk of Court, U.S. Representatives)
5. Special Master (3) – provided to Special Masters, who are appointed to hear Code Compliance, Fire and Building violations appeals

Exhibit A, located at the end of this report, provides a departmentalized breakdown of the total number of active CW and G parking permits respectively for the City Employees and Fire Department Employees categories as of May 21, 2020.

Multiple documents were requested from City departments to justify the issuance of this large number of CW and G parking permits. It became evident from reviewing the documents provided that this issue has not been scrutinized in many years, and that no clear policy applies to the granting of such permits.

For example, the Parking Department provided City Resolution No. 92-20462 effective February 19, 1992 which states *"A resolution of the city commission of the city of Miami Beach, Florida, directing the City Manager to revoke all current parking decals issued without expiration date, and providing that, hereafter, with the exception of temporary permits issued for thirty days or less, all city parking decals issued to all city employees, board and committee members and all other individuals shall be issued only on a yearly basis and shall be issued only to persons engaged in regular and necessary, service to the city which requires them to park a vehicle at metered locations within the City."*

Included with this City Resolution there is an unsigned Parking Department policy and procedure entitled City Parking Permits which states: *“Employees who have a frequent need to use their personal vehicles on City business may be issued a city-wide parking permit which allows them to park free of charge at any city parking meter. These permits are granted at the employee's Department Director's discretion and are subject to the approval of the Personnel Director.*

The Mayor and City Commissioners shall receive a maximum of two (2) city-wide decals for use on their private vehicles. These decals shall bear an expiration date which shall be the last day of their term of office. Upon leaving office, each commissioner shall receive one decal per year.”

OIG staff requested more recent signed Standard Operating Procedures for parking permits from the Parking Department, but none were provided. It is assumed that there are none. Up-to-date Standard Operating Procedures are important as they serve both as a benchmark to measure individuals' compliance and as a guide when new permits are issued or when personnel changes occur. Once completed, they should be distributed to all applicable personnel and supervisors so that they can be read, understood and followed.

The City Clerk's Office provided documentation showing that there was debate in 1997/98 as to whether Board and Committee members should be granted free parking adjacent to City Hall, Citywide parking decals or something in between. Contrary to the recommendations of the Board and Committee Review Committee and the City Administration, the City Commission adopted Resolution No. 98-22637 on January 12, 1998, directing the Administration to issue Citywide parking decals (now CW parking permits) to members of City agencies, boards and committees during their time of service.

The OIG believes that the City Commission should make the final determination as to the criteria for the issuance of either a CW or G permit to City employees and that it should be related to either the individual's position (Assistant Director or above) and/or based on job duties (frequent need to travel throughout the City on business) consistent with the aforementioned 1992 Parking Department's unsigned policies and procedures. Without this type of supporting documentation, it is difficult to determine whether CW and G parking permits have been properly issued and properly remain in effect.

It is further recommended that the current Employee Parking Application form should be amended to include a section that requires the preparer to indicate the reason justifying the issuance of the CW or G parking permit. Unless the City Commission approved criteria are satisfied to receive either a CW or G parking permit, individuals should receive a location-specific parking permit based on their regular meeting sites.

OIG staff analyzed the Parking Department's databases and supporting documentation provided from various City departments and noted the following:

1. Of the 304 CW permits issued to Board and Committee members in compliance with City Resolution No. 98-22637, 33 were assigned to vehicles owned by individuals who were not active members as of May 21, 2020. The total number of ineligible individuals receiving these parking permits was 31, as two individuals had been issued CW permits for two vehicles concurrently. It is recommended that a process be created and followed whereby the Parking Department is timely notified of termination of a Board and Committee member's service and that outdated parking permits are timely rescinded.

Although no documentation was received indicating whether it was permissible for these individuals to have more than one parking permit concurrently, the OIG opines that it could create the perception that improper benefits are being obtained for family members or other connected individuals. The possibility exists that these other individuals are using these vehicles

simultaneously to obtain free parking within the City's boundaries. Unfortunately, there is no practical way to effectively determine how frequently this practice occurs, but the issuance of only one parking permit per individual, except in specially approved cases, would help eliminate this possible abuse.

2. Four former City employees in the City Employees category, one former temporary employee and one City contractor had an active CW or G parking permit issued to their vehicles' license plates ranging from a low of 55 days to a high of 864 days after they had been terminated or their contract had expired. A fifth employee needs her CW to be reclassified from a "City Employee" to a "Boards & Committee members" as she no longer works for the City but is a member of the Disability Access Committee. It is recommended that a Citywide procedure be created whereby the Parking Department is promptly notified when permitted individuals are terminated, their contracts expire, etc. to ensure that outdated parking permits are timely rescinded. Otherwise, individuals will continue to receive access to free Miami Beach parking for which they do not qualify.

Furthermore, a total of 46 current City Officials and employees, excluding those in the Fire Department Employees' category, were issued two or more CW or G parking permits. Of these, 40 had two vehicles, five had three vehicles, and one had four vehicles, for a total of 100 vehicles. Once again, it is not recommended that these individuals be eligible to receive more than one parking permit at a time to avoid potential abuses.

3. A total of 136 Fire Department employees were granted CW parking permits in the Fire Department Employees category. Of these, 114 individuals had one vehicle, 21 had two vehicles, and one had three vehicles, for a total of 159 vehicles.

When questioned initially as to the reason for the issuance of these parking permits, the Fire Chief responded via email that Fire Station #1 was undergoing underground improvements a while back and its parking lot was unavailable; therefore, its firefighters had to park in the nearby streets, and some of their vehicles were towed. As a result, the Parking Department started issuing CW parking permits in April 2018 to the designated firefighters for the vehicles in which they rode to work.

Further, it was determined that these firefighters did not complete the Employee Parking Application Form, which requires the City Manager's approval prior to issuance. The Parking Department informed that an agreement was reached with the Fire Chief whereby firefighters would be temporarily issued Fire Department Employee parking permits while the underground improvement project was ongoing.

OIG staff confirmed with the City's Public Works Department that the underground improvement project affecting Fire Station #1's parking lot was completed in the fall of 2018. Yet, the Fire Department sent several subsequent emails to the Parking Department during the months that have elapsed since, indicating which firefighters should continue to receive CW parking permits. For example, the most recent email including a listing was dated January 8, 2020 in which a Fire Division Chief also stated that an October 17, 2019 citation issued to a firefighter should be removed. The OIG staff was informed that the citation was issued because the Fire Captain did not update his vehicle license plate information with the Parking Department. Once notified of his new license plate, the citation was voided as he was legally parked in the P26 lot, located at 1080 Lincoln Lane North.

It was also noted that seven former Fire Department employees had active CW permits issued to their vehicles after their termination date, ranging from a low of 185 days to a high of 747 days as of our August 3, 2020 test date. These seven terminated individuals were also included in subsequent Fire Department emails to the Parking Department identifying those who should

retain their CW parking permit privileges.

A meeting was held on September 2, 2020 with the Fire Chief and an Assistant Fire Chief whereby the following additional information was conveyed to the OIG auditors:

- Although the Parking Department was unaware, the CW parking permits are also used by firefighters in the completion of off-duty engagements or other scheduled work in which they use their personal vehicles.
- Fire Station #1 continues to have a shortage of parking for its staff long after the completion of the underground improvement project, which is magnified during shift changes as the need for parking spaces doubles during this time. In addition, the Fire Chief stated that a truck occupies a section of the parking lot four times every week (twice a day on two different days) to empty sewage pipes in that area. Consequently, some of the firefighters' personal vehicles are parked at nearby public parking spaces outside Fire Station #1's designated parking lot. There are approximately 50 firefighters that are permanently assigned to Fire Station #1 at any given time.
- Miami Beach firefighters stationed at Fire Stations #2, 3 or 4 may also periodically work or be re-assigned to Fire Station #1 and would need a CW parking permit for these occasions.
- Fire Station #4 has a parking shortage and its firefighters typically angle park their vehicles on the dead-end section of 69th Street located directly west of Indian Creek Drive. OIG staff noted that there is no signage prohibiting parking in this area, so it is recommended that signage be added to prohibit its usage by others. If these spaces are full, or to prevent vandalism, some firefighters park their personal vehicles at nearby public parking spaces. In this area, there are various "no charge" parking spaces that can be utilized by staff on a first-come-first-served basis.

For the reasons above, the Fire Chief claimed that CW parking permits continue to be offered to all firefighters, although some have not opted to receive them. There are approximately 200 firefighters, but only 136 have been issued CW parking permits.

The Fire Chief stated that, prior to his hiring, firefighters would place a T-shirt with the Miami Beach Fire Department logo on their personal vehicles' dashboards to prevent being cited or towed. Although this practice seemed to work well, the usage of these T-shirts was difficult to control as they could be counterfeited, used after an individual's termination date, etc.

In its place, the Fire Chief developed hang tags that were to be prominently displayed when parked in Miami Beach outside the designated Fire Station's parking spaces, and notification provided to the Parking Department. Fire Department management also controlled the issuance of hang tags to desiring staff as needed, and collected them upon completion of the engagement.

The Fire Chief mistakenly thought that the Parking Enforcement Specialists would scan each vehicle's license plate and check for a hang tag before issuing a citation or having the vehicle towed. He was unaware that the hang tags had no value to Parking Department enforcement personnel as their focus is only on each vehicle's scanned license plate.

Based on the known facts, the OIG recommends that the approximately 50 firefighters permanently assigned to Fire Station #1 should continue to receive the Fire Department Employees parking permits. Fire Department management should promptly notify the Parking Department of any future staffing changes so that the firefighters' parking permits can be appropriately rescinded or issued. All other firefighters should be temporarily issued hang tags by Fire Department management for off-duty engagements, e.g. at Fire Station #1, etc. To facilitate enforcement, the City's Information Technology Department staff should re-program the handheld devices used by the Parking Enforcement Specialists to prompt them to also review the existence of a hang tag on any scanned firefighter's personal vehicle before taking any disciplinary action.

4. Of the 45 active parking permits in the Miscellaneous-CW category, 27 were issued to former City Mayors and Commissioners. Despite being requested, neither the City Clerk's Office, the Parking Department nor the Human Resources Department provided documentation indicating that former City Officials are to continue to receive one CW parking per year after their term of service expires other than the unsigned Parking Department policy and procedure entitled City Parking Permits. To officially document this privilege, the City Commission should consider adopting a Resolution granting such a policy.

It was also noted that three vehicles, one belonging to a former Mayor and two to former Commissioners, had active Miscellaneous-CW parking permits assigned to them although they were deceased. These individuals had passed away during the past five years, but their permits had not yet been rescinded. An effective method of monitoring such permits should be adopted.

Finally, one former Assistant City Manager was issued a lifetime Miscellaneous-CW parking permit upon retirement at the request of the City Manager, although no approved policy or procedure officially documents this privilege.

5. On a positive note, it was verified that no current City employees using "take-home" City vehicles also received car allowance benefits through the payroll process.

Approved by:



Joseph Centorino, Inspector General

09/23/2020
Date

Reviewed by:



Mark Coolidge, Chief Auditor

09-23-2020
Date

Completed by:



Norman Blaiotta, Deputy Chief Auditor

09/23/2020
Date

Exhibit A

Department	Citywide Permits	G Permits	Total
FIRE DEPARTMENT*	163	4	167
MAYOR & COMMISSION	12	16	28
CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE	13	13	26
COMMUNITY SERVICES	24	1	25
PROCUREMENT	23	2	25
CITY MANAGERS OFFICE	7	15	22
PLANNING	18	2	20
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS (CIP)	14	5	19
PARKING	18		18
PARKS & RECREATION	11	7	18
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	12	1	13
OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL	12	1	13
COMMUNICATIONS	11	2	13
PUBLIC WORKS	10	3	13
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT	9	2	11
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	6	4	10
POLICE	9		9
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT	8	1	9
BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT	8	1	9
FINANCE	6	2	8
TRANSPORTATION	4	2	6
HUMAN RESOURCES	4	1	5
GRANTS MANAGEMENT	4		4
ENVIRONMENTAL & SUSTAINABILITY	4		4
CITY CLERK	2	2	4
REAL ESTATE/HOUSING	3		3
MIAMI BEACH HOUSING AUTHORITY**	3		3
ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	1	2	3
MIAMI BEACH VISITOR & CONVENTION AUTHORITY**	2		2
FLEET MANAGEMENT	2		2
CODE COMPLIANCE	2		2
BUILDING DEPARTMENT	1	1	2
BASS MUSEUM**	1		1
RISK MANAGEMENT	1		1
Total	428	90	518

* Four Emergency Management employees (part of Fire Department) were included under the Citywide category

** Agencies are not City departments, but were included in these categories by the Parking Department

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MIAMIBEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

Appendix A

MEMORANDUM

TO: Joseph Centorino, Inspector General

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: September 23, 2020

SUBJECT: **INSPECTION REPORT: G & CITYWIDE PARKING PERMITS OIG No. 20-2020**

Please accept this memorandum as my response to your inspection report on Citywide (CW) and "G" parking permits (OIG No. 20-2020).

Your report identifies areas of concern or discrepancy in the issuance and maintenance of the subject permits. This year, the Pandemic affected the timely review of certain permit records as Parking Department staffing was significantly diminished and the OAV assigned this duty was reassigned to the Resource Center.

In the Board and Committee member category, a reconciliation of Parking Department and City Clerk records is done annually. At the end of February or first week of March, a reconciliation process occurs where Parking records are compared to those of the City Clerk's. This was not done this year and consequently there were 31 cases in which the parking permits were not rescinded. A process to conduct the reconciliation process twice per year coupled with timely notification of changes by the City Clerk's office, will serve to avoid similar future occurrences.

In the former employee category, there is a process whereby the Human Resources Department advises the Parking Department of terminated employees. This process has worked well, but unfortunately there were errors that are being addressed by changing the employees assigned to implement changes upon notification. In regards, to the issuance of CW permits to Fire Department staff, the initial issuance of these permits was done to address a temporary need. In the process, the need for continued CW permits was established but the required process of submitting a CW application per employee was not followed. In the miscellaneous category, a new procedure will be implemented to ensure permits are renewed on an annual basis.

Be assured that corrective action to address the noted deficiencies has been or will be implemented. Additionally, we will bring before the Board, a resolution and policy addressing permit issuance to provide clear guidelines governing permit issuance.

On a personal note, I know that I get two permits each year, one for each of our two family cars. There are occasions when I use my wife's SUV during the course of the year, such as when my car needs servicing, flooding conditions during storms or king tides where the SUV will perform better, or such other occasions. Since the permits are adhesive to the window, they cannot be transferred from one car to another. As such, I have a permit for each car just in case.