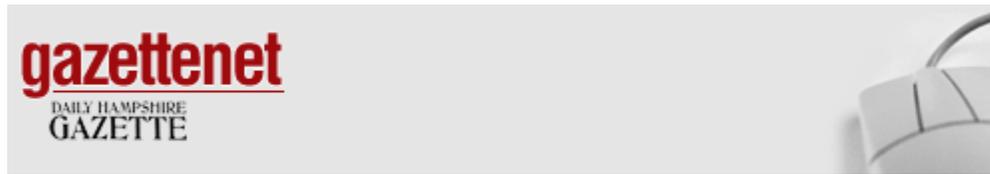


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## Amherst man vents ire over parking

BY MARY CAREY STAFF WRITER

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**AMHERST** - A resident who was so frustrated about getting a parking ticket last month that he allegedly tried to tear the meter out of the ground and was summoned to court is going public with his campaign to change the parking situation in town.

Philip Garrow, of 143 Fearing St., presented his animated critique of parking enforcement in town to the Select Board on Monday.

He said he was moved to complain after receiving a ticket recently. "Despite my vigilance I was unable to avoid breaking the law," Garrow said, reading from his prepared remarks. "I appealed this ticket and I lost. I hate this experience. Everyone hates this experience. And everyone who parks in Amherst gets ticketed, inevitably."

Garrow hated the experience so much that he verbally abused the parking enforcement official and tried to tear the meter out of the ground, Town Manager Barry Del Castilho said in an e-mail.

Garrow, an engineer, was subsequently summoned to court on a charge of causing less than \$250 damage to property. He is scheduled to appear on Jan. 3 for a show-cause hearing at Eastern Hampshire District Court in Hadley, he said.

"What happened was the parking meter shifted in the soft earth. To say it is ripping it out is to suggest I'm doing a Hulk routine or something."

Garrow believes the town suffers from overzealous enforcement of parking laws. He also says there is a shortage of available spaces because UMass students have an incentive to park off-campus: The rates are so high on campus, he said, that it's cheaper to park in a town space, even if it leads to a parking ticket.

The Amherst resident has also expressed frustration at times with speed enforcement in Leverett. Last year, he met with the Leverett Select Board for an hour to explain why he thinks a 45-mph zone on Route 63 is illegal and why he thinks it is inappropriate for Leverett to be profiting from speeding tickets. Garrow created a Web site, [www.leverettspeedtrap.com](http://www.leverettspeedtrap.com), to raise awareness of his concerns. Kelson Ting, the then-acting Leverett police chief, said alerting people to the police presence would help his department's patrolling efforts. "We want people to slow down," Ting said.

In Garrow's remarks to the Amherst board, he said that he has appealed tickets

in the past only to have his appeals denied. If a person loses an appeal, the "only next level appeal is to file a civil action against the town of Amherst in Superior Court," he said. But the filing fee is \$275, and if you win the action, the only expense you recover is the \$8 fine.

The \$8 fine for parking violations is up from \$5 last year. In an effort to help close shortfalls in the town budget in recent years, the Select Board also raised the cost of parking from 30 to 40 cents an hour at meters and 20 to 50 cents an hour at the Boltwood Parking Garage. Other fines, including for parking in handicapped spaces, were doubled.

Garrow described to the Select Board his plan to involve the University of Massachusetts in adjusting parking rates on campus in a manner that will discourage students from parking downtown. Problems with parking are hurting downtown commerce and contributing to rising taxes, he said, so it's in the interest of the town to find solutions. He said he has filed an application to the reconstituted Amherst Parking Commission Task-Force, for which the Select Board is currently taking applications.

Task force members likely will represent a number of competing concerns besides Garrow's. Select Board members this week said they would consider giving special consideration to applicants who put a high priority on bicyclist and pedestrian concerns relative to the issue.

A looming question before the board now is whether to eliminate 22 parking spaces on Main Street in front of the Emily Dickinson Museum. Bicycle lane advocates say the parking spaces in front of the museum interfere with a bicyclist's ability to approach the downtown. But some business owners, including Nick Seamon, of the Black Sheep Deli & Bakery, argue that downtown employees and customers are already pressed for places to park now during peak periods.

Other factors affecting parking, according to the town's interim planning director Jonathan Tucker, include more businesses and restaurants opening downtown, the planned expansion of the malls in Hadley and the anticipated opening of the Amherst Cinema on Amity Street.

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