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## Parking fine? You can pay online

New city program aims to boost revenue; 'convenience fee' levied at \$3.50 per ticket

*By Michael Valkys  
Poughkeepsie Journal*

Drivers hit with parking tickets in the City of Poughkeepsie no longer have to pay their fines in person at city hall, or through the mail.

In a program city officials believe could be the first of its kind in Dutchess County, drivers can now pay their parking fines online. Those who choose that option will be charged a \$3.50 per ticket "convenience fee" on top of their fines.

The new system, which debuted two weeks ago, is designed to make it more convenient for drivers to pay their tickets. Officials also hope it increases revenue from parking tickets - many of which go unpaid.

"We are enhancing technologies throughout city hall to be able to provide more user-friendly opportunities," Mayor John Tkazyik said. "This is one opportunity for people to take advantage of."

Tkazyik said no one has used the new online payment system yet, but he hopes drivers will as word about the program spreads.

Drivers interviewed outside the post office near city hall had mixed reactions to the online option.

Former Poughkeepsie resident Julie Murray, visiting from North Carolina, said she would likely pay parking tickets by mail - and save \$3.50.

"I would probably go the old-fashioned way," Murray said.

City resident Jim Poonjani said he would use the online system, noting problems could arise for drivers if payments are lost in the mail.

"It's more convenient," Poonjani said of electronic payment.

Tkazyik said the city is working with ParkingTicketPayment.com, which is run by Tarrytown-based Complus Data Innovations. Under the arrangement, Tkazyik said the city will pay the company 12.5 percent of ticket revenue generated through the online system.

According to the company, the service allows drivers to pay parking tickets "over a secure Web site with most major credit cards. Once payments are processed ... records at the City of Poughkeepsie will be updated accordingly, in real time, and your parking tickets will be marked as paid."

The online payment method is one of several city initiatives over the past year designed to bolster revenues and crack down on parking ticket scofflaws.

An amnesty program for parking scofflaws was offered last fall as the city forgave accumulated late fees on unpaid violations. Officials estimated more than \$100,000 was collected as drivers paid their initial fines.

Before the amnesty began, officials said Poughkeepsie was owed more than \$1 million in unpaid parking tickets from the previous several years.

Officials last year also announced police would aggressively target vehicles owned by drivers with six or more unpaid parking tickets. Police use a portable license plate scanner to identify scofflaw vehicles on city streets and in municipal parking lots. Such vehicles are then impounded.

The Common Council last year hiked administrative fees for such violations from \$50 to \$75. Storage costs for impounded cars were increased from \$10 to \$20 per day.

Meanwhile, the mayor said the city is exploring other ways technology can make life easier for residents.

Tkazyik said officials are working on programs that would eventually allow residents to pay water, sewer and tax bills online as well.

## Additional Facts

### Resources

For information about the online payment program, visit [www.cityofpoughkeepsie.com](http://www.cityofpoughkeepsie.com) or call 845-451-4027.

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