

Legislation Creates Glitch in Kodiak Parking Enforcement

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

A bill passed in the Alaska Legislature three years ago went into effect this month, and brought with it some unforeseen consequences. Alaska law now mandates that police officers personally serve citations. The face-to-face requirement isn't a big deal, until you consider parking tickets.

Like many cities across the state, Kodiak handles parking violations through its district court. But as of April 15, when the hand-issued citation law went into effect, court systems won't hear any case from a violator that wasn't personally served. So the age-old method of leaving a ticket under a windshield wiper won't fly in front of a judge.

Kodiak Police Chief T.C. Kamai said the new law definitely complicates things, but it doesn't make parking tickets null and void.

"It has an impact on the City of Kodiak's parking supervision program. But it doesn't mean that parking citations cannot be issued. They still can be, they just have to be personally served," he said.

Basically, a parking enforcer, like the community service officer here in Kodiak, will have to wait beside the violator's vehicle until the owner returns. Kamai said it's not ideal, which is why the city's attorney is reviewing city codes with the idea of making the city parking violations administrative in nature.

"And by doing that, what we hope to achieve is a system of violations that will not fall under the purview of the district court. They can be reviewed at an administrative level at the city of Kodiak," he said, adding "If we're able to accomplish that, the personal service requirement wouldn't apply."

The concept isn't new. In Anchorage, parking violators appear before a city or borough authority, not a judge. And with the new law, it's likely that more and more cities in Alaska will switch to that method of handling parking tickets.

But what about Kodiak? How big is the parking problem, and how many citations are issued each year? Kamai said he didn't have an exact number, but it's not very much.

"But we do write parking citations. And we write them for people parking in no parking zones, for blocking fire hydrants, for parking over time, for parking in handicap zones, taxi stands," Kamai said. "They are written, but there's not, like, lots and lots and lots of them."

Still, parking is limited, especially downtown. And until the citations become administrative, Kamai said the police department will have to enforce parking the best it can with what resources it has.

APRN's Alexandra Gutierrez contributed to this story.