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# Proposal creates concern on safety

## *Eason cites lack of consultation*

By Chris Sykes  
Staff Writer

While Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. announced, with great fanfare that he would seek to have school crossing guards issue parking tickets, concerns have been expressed about the new powers and policy decisions behind them.

"There was no sort of implementation plan presented to us and we were not consulted about it," said City Council President Tency Eason. "I always think that you need to have a plan to roll big changes like this out so that things will go smoothly, but none of that happened as far as we know.

"Even with them writing the tickets, the city still doesn't know how much money it's going to bring in," Eason continued. "You have to pay the crossing guards for doing this extra duty, and if they log in too many extra hour, they will have to get extra pay and maybe benefits."

Raymond Wingfield, president of the union that represents rank-and-file city employees, said he could understand Eason's concern. Wingfield said the practical aspects of implementing the extra-service agreement was not foremost in the minds of those at the negotiating table.

In hindsight, Wingfield said the safety concerns for the guards is obvious. But he said it was important to develop new revenue streams for the city. Wingfield added he has had more proposals, but they have previously fallen on deaf ears.

"I also think that we should explore creating a parking authority. East Orange, Newark, South Orange and Montclair all have them and they make a lot of money off that," Wingfield said. "Even though I'm in favor of that, I'm more concerned about the safety issues. I think it was premature for the mayor to go out and make a statement about the crossing guards without informing us that he was going to start asking them to do the things we only talked about during our contract negotiations."

Councilman Elroy Corbitt said he believed there are serious security and safety concerns about the crossing guards writing parking tickets that have not been addressed. He said it remained to be seen how the plan will play out.

"I think asking the crossing guards to write parking tickets puts them at risk," Corbitt said. "I just hope the city trains them thoroughly and they are able to protect themselves in the event that they run into a hostile vehicle owner who gets upset because he or she was ticketed. I hope that we don't have any kind of assaults on the crossing guards who are now writing tickets."