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(54) **SINGLE SPACE PARKING METER AND
REMOVABLE SINGLE SPACE PARKING
METER MECHANISM**

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Jul. 7, 2014, now Pat. No. 9,443,236, which is a
continuation of application No. 13/410,831, filed on
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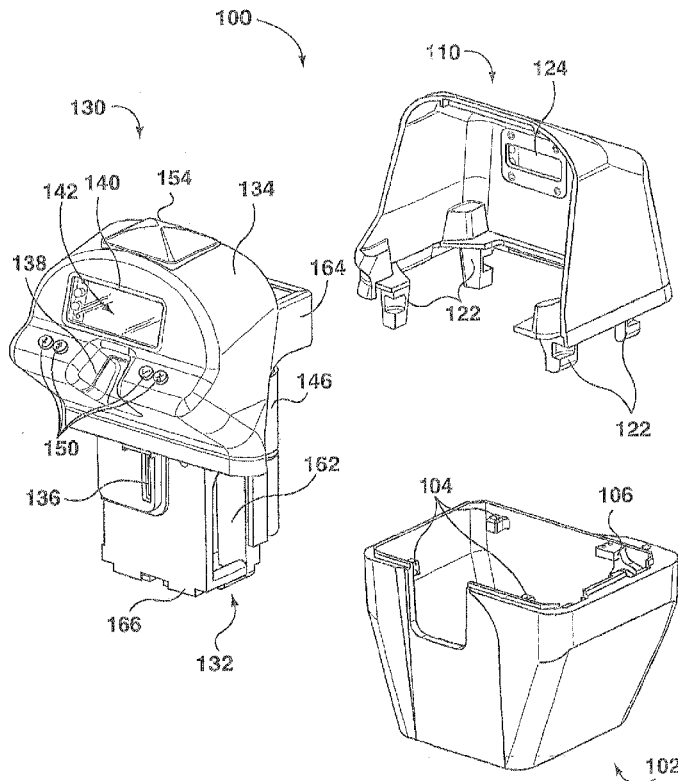
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A parking meter mechanism is described that may include a front housing, having a display opening for viewing a display through, connected to an internal structure. Additionally or alternatively the parking meter mechanism may include a contactless payment reader located behind the display. The parking meter mechanism may be secured to a lower housing. A back housing may be secured to the lower housing as well. The front or back housing may include a solar panel compartment and solar panel mounted therein.



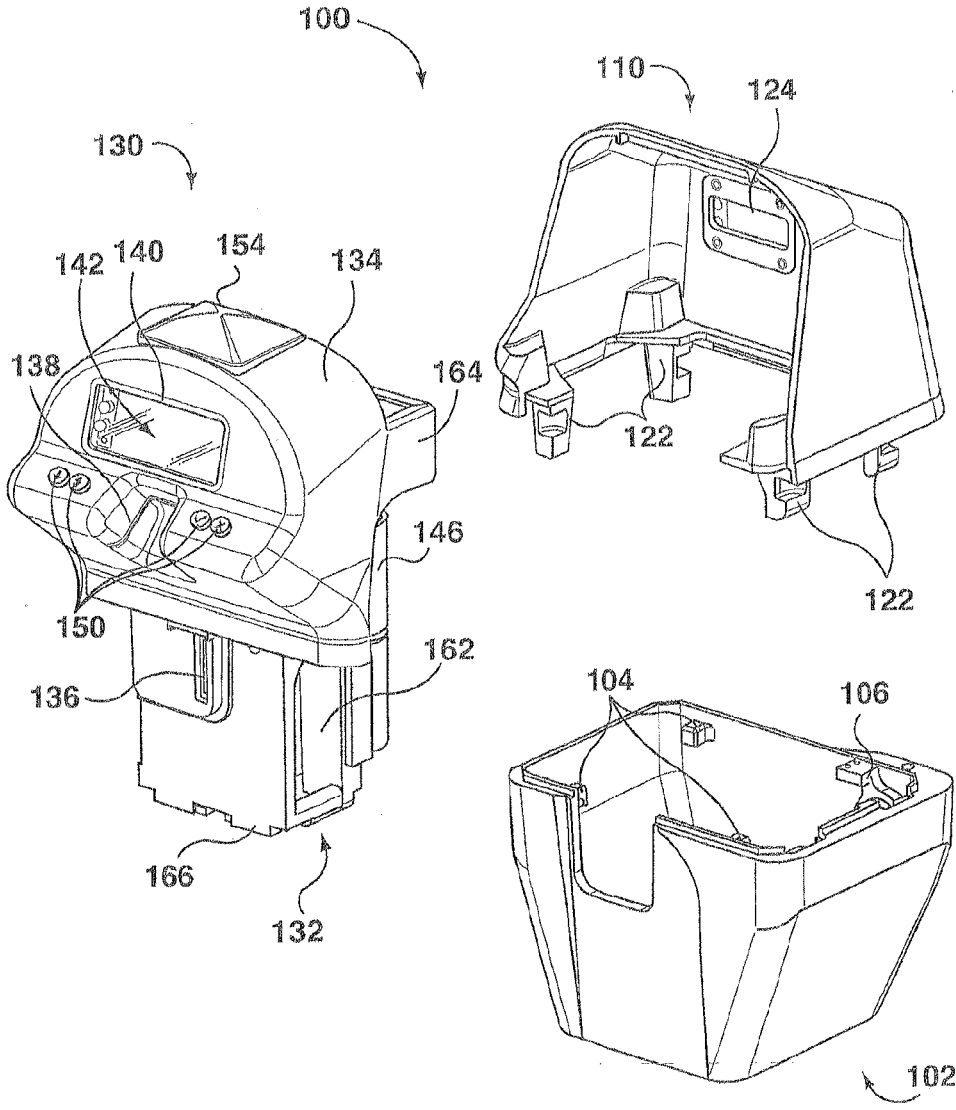


FIG. 1

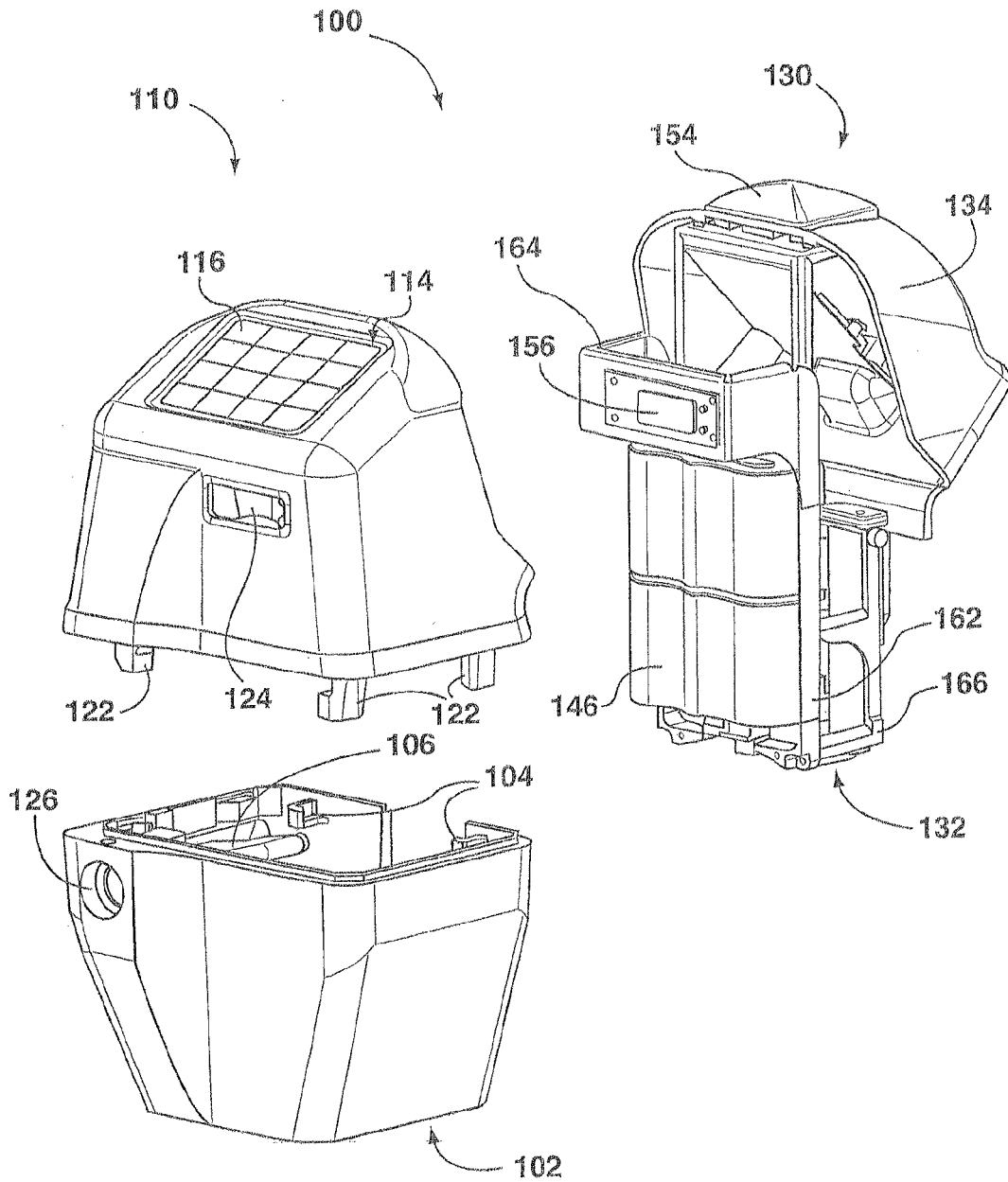


FIG. 2

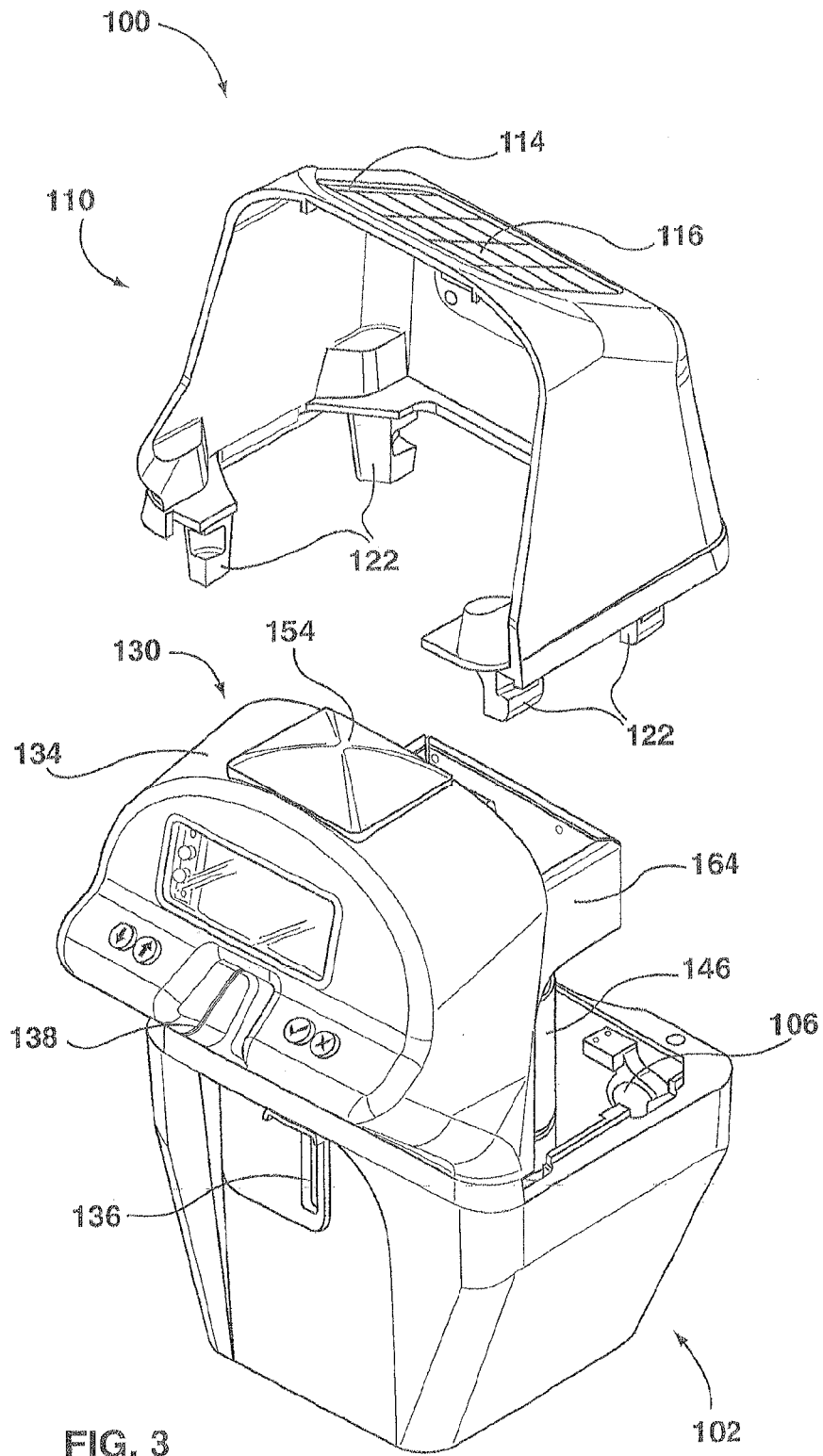


FIG. 3

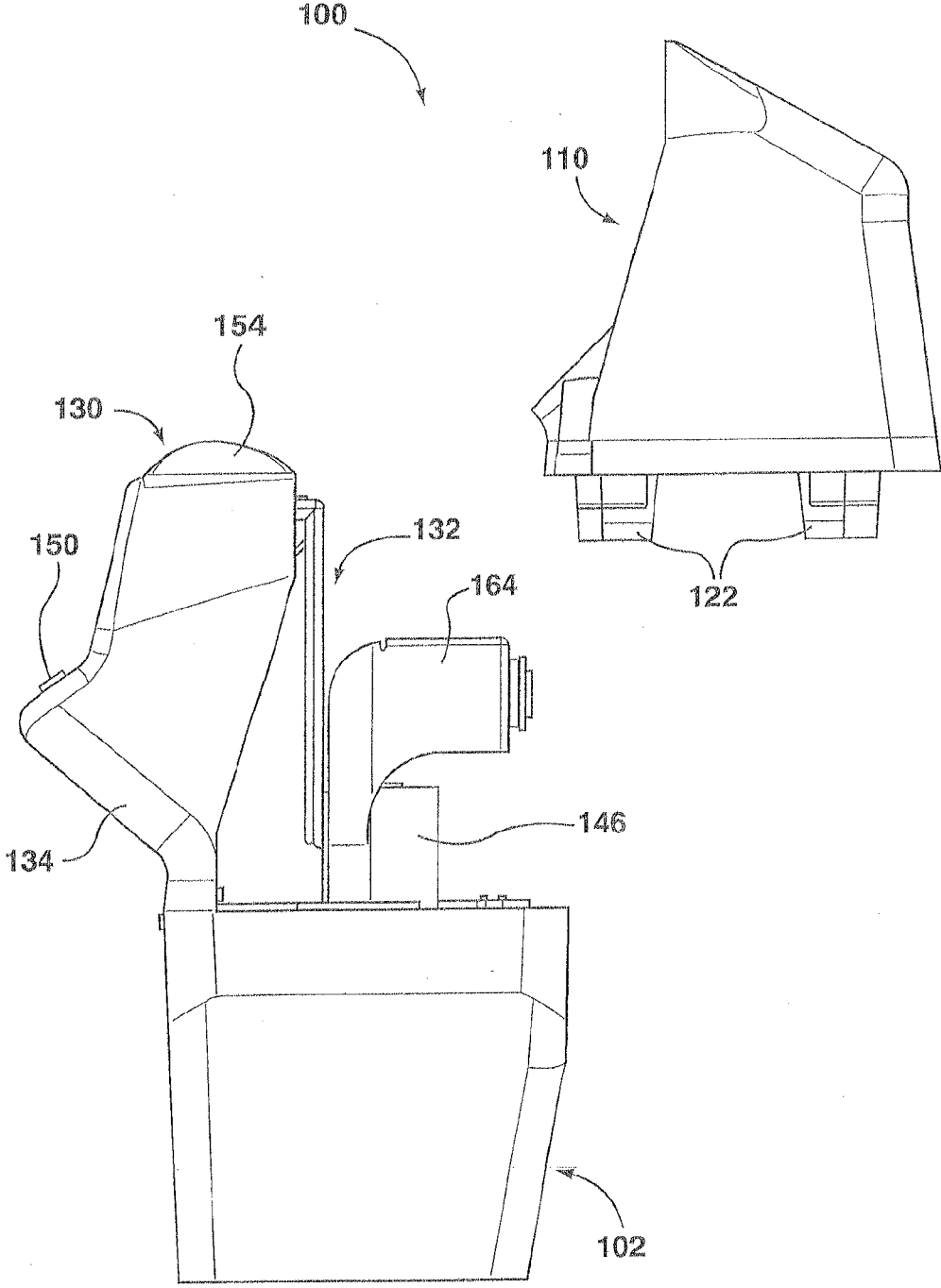


FIG. 4

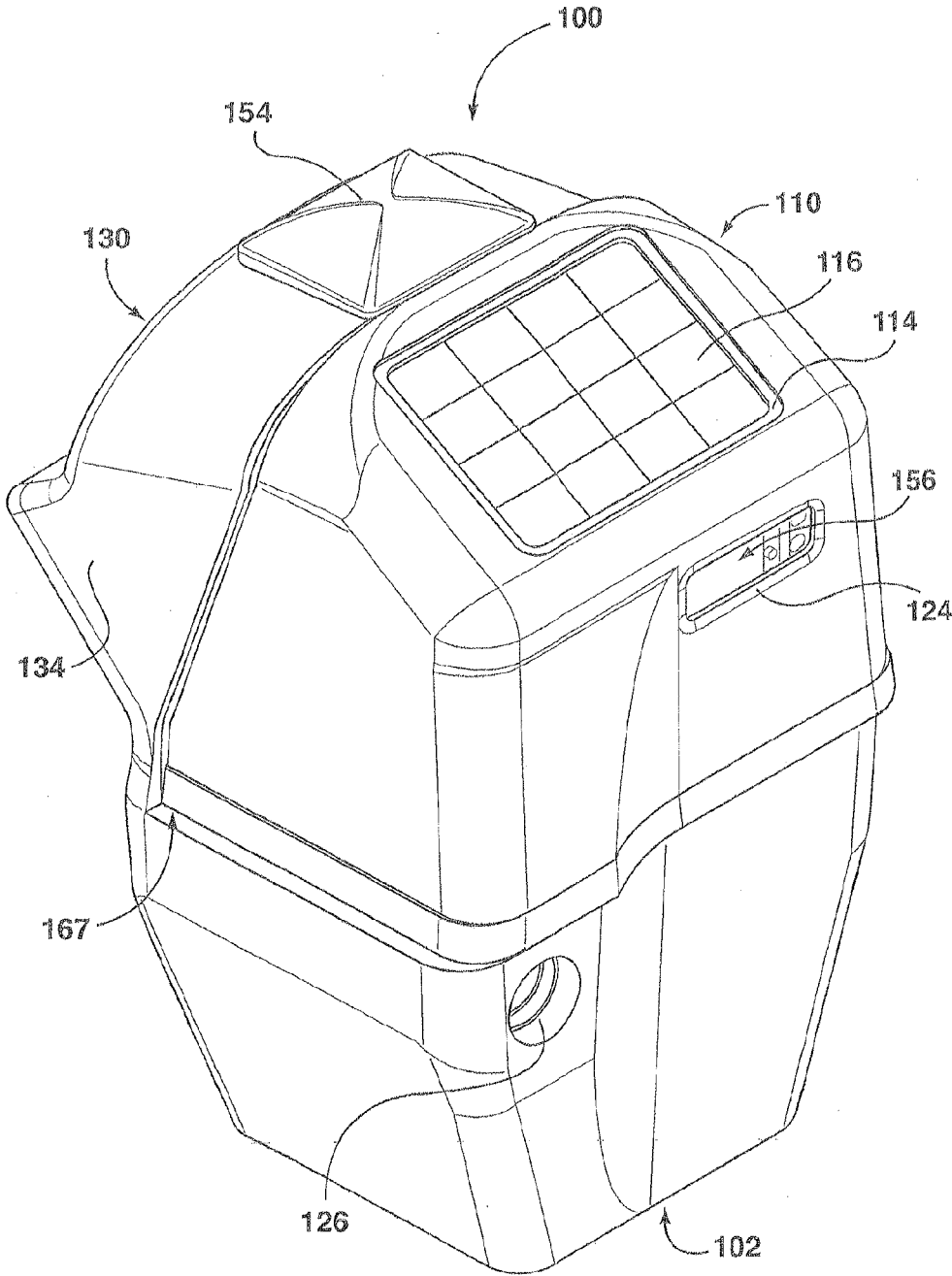


FIG. 5

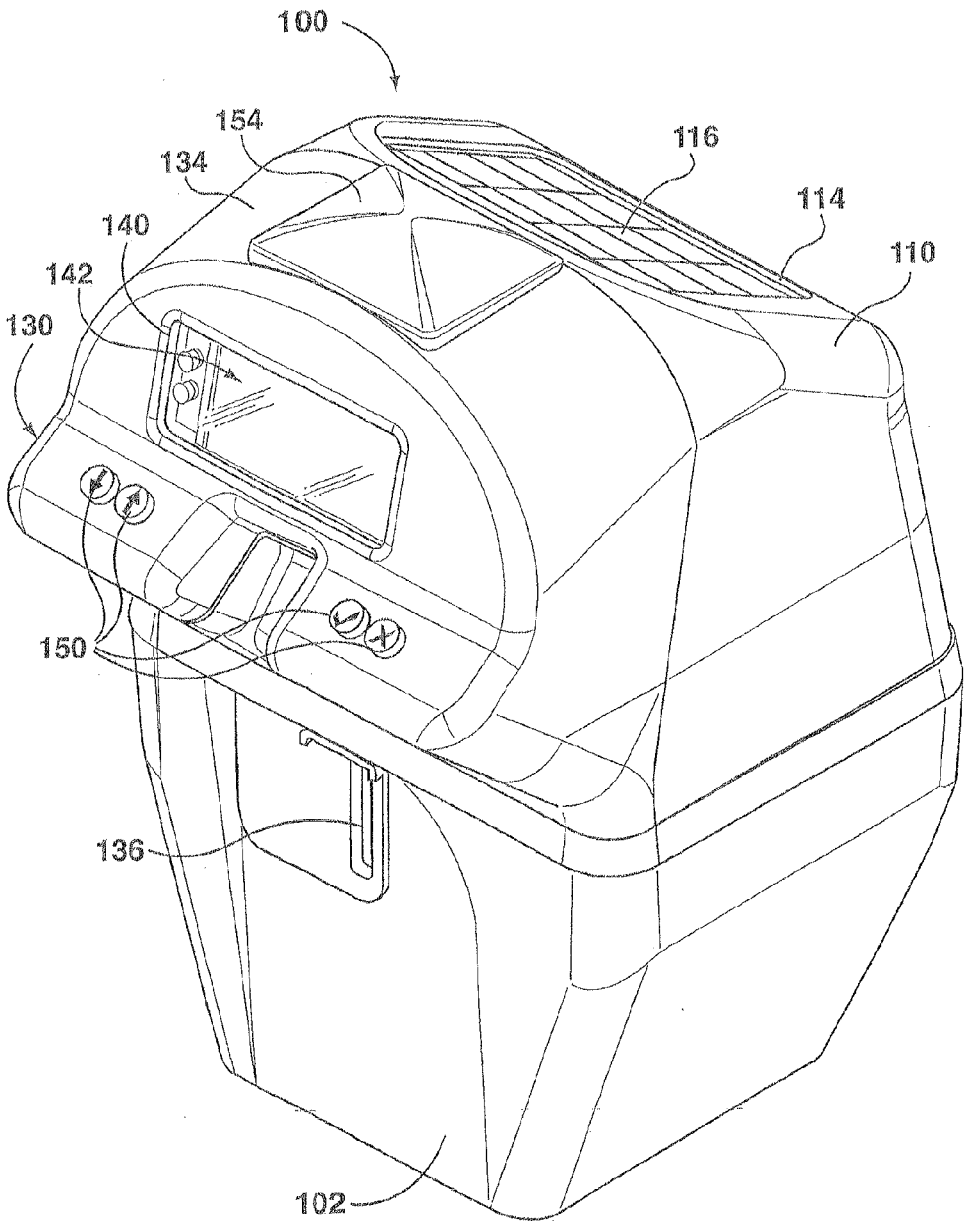


FIG. 6

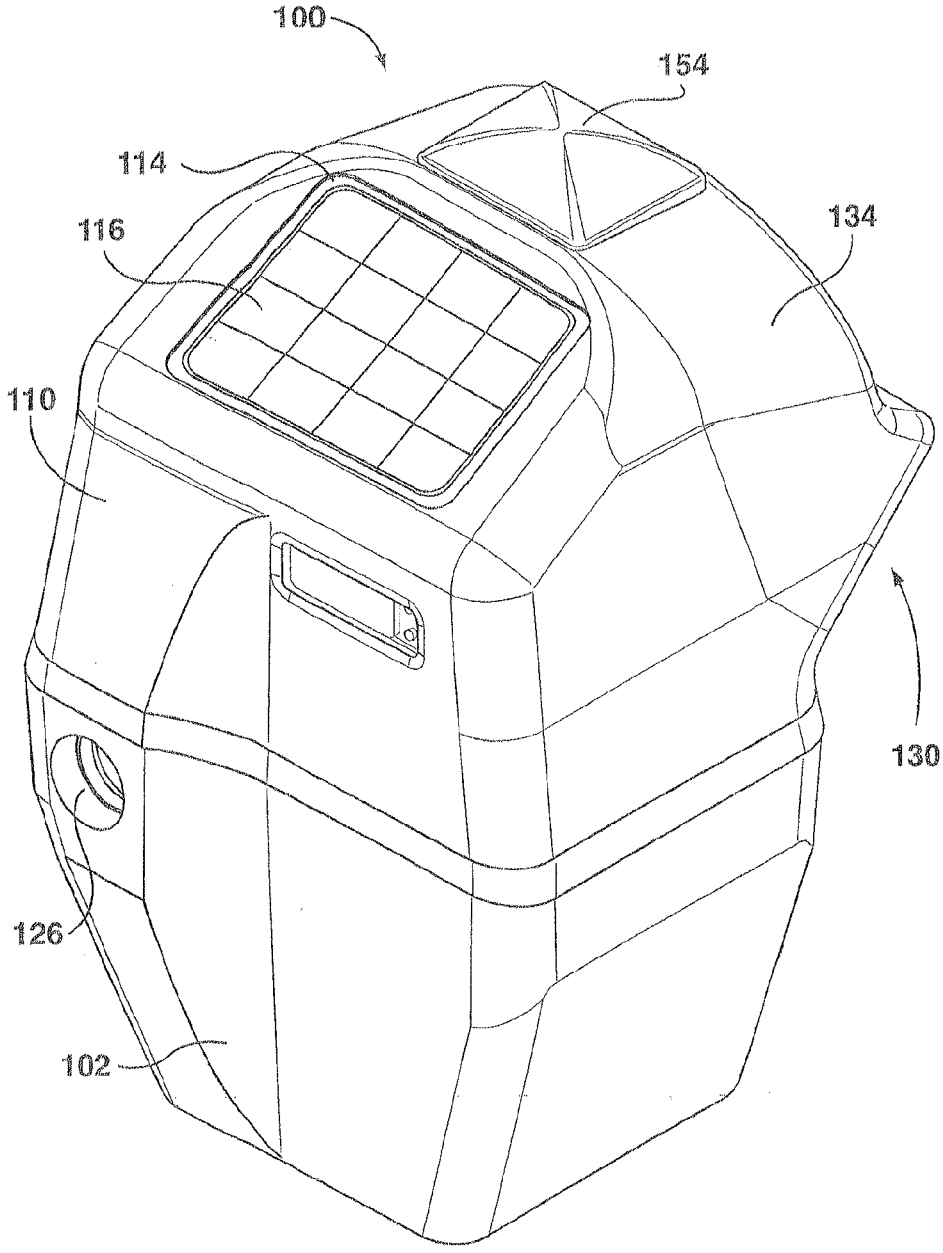


FIG. 7

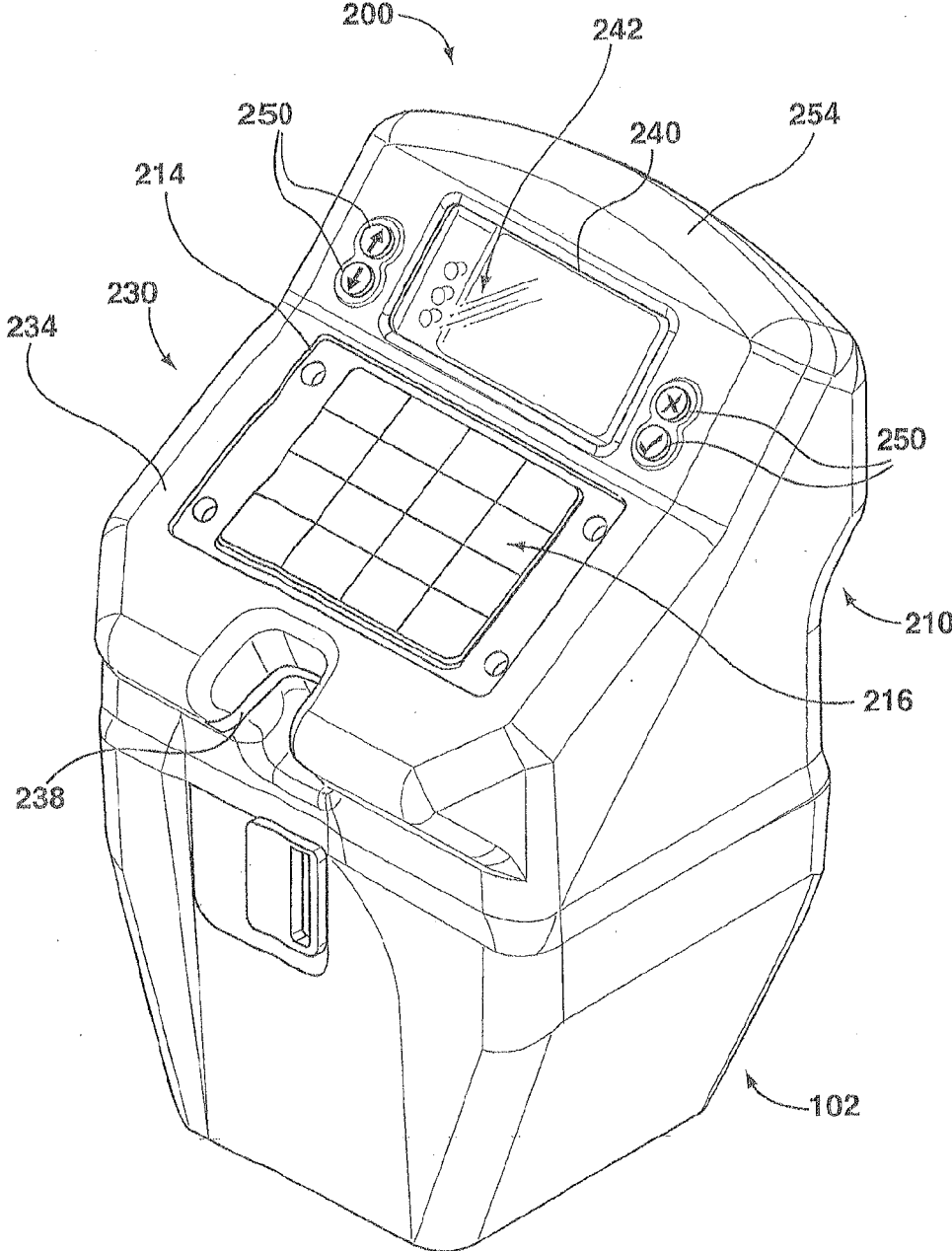


FIG. 8

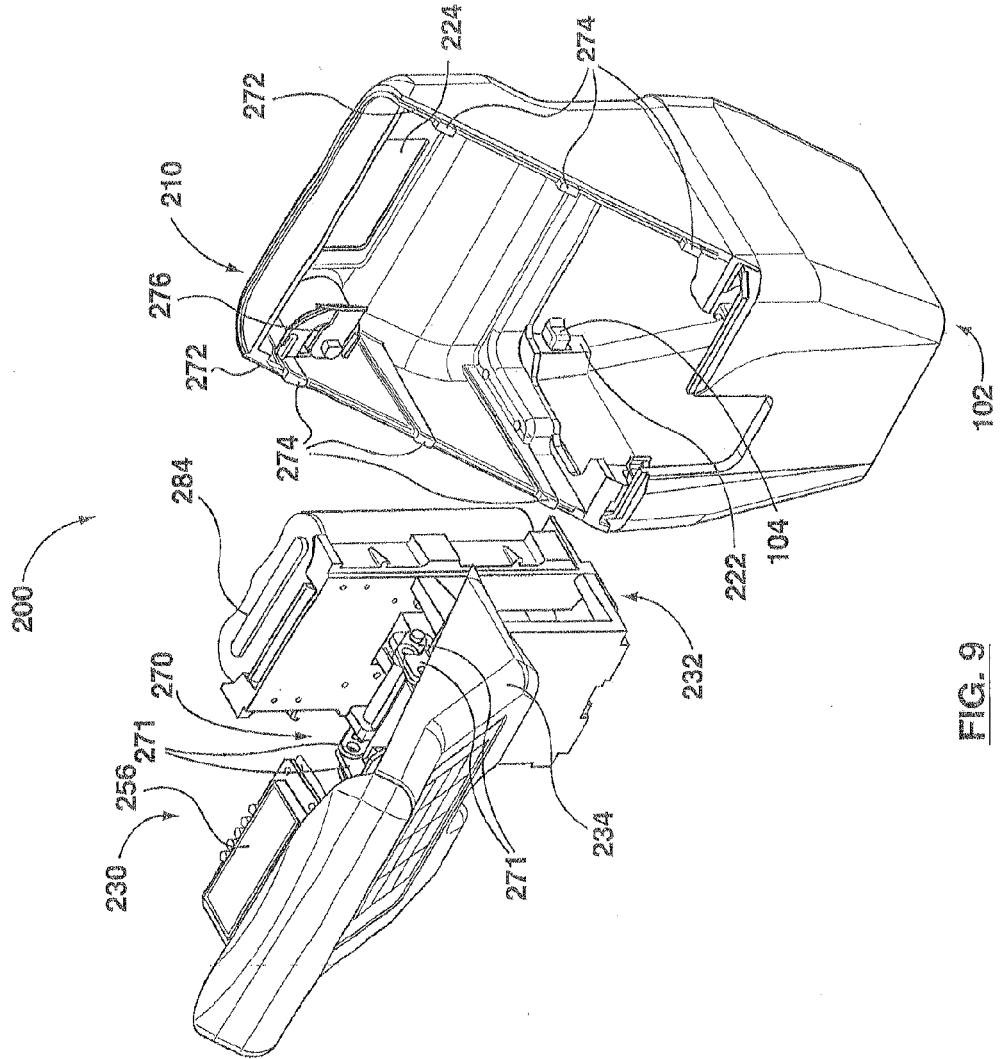


FIG. 9

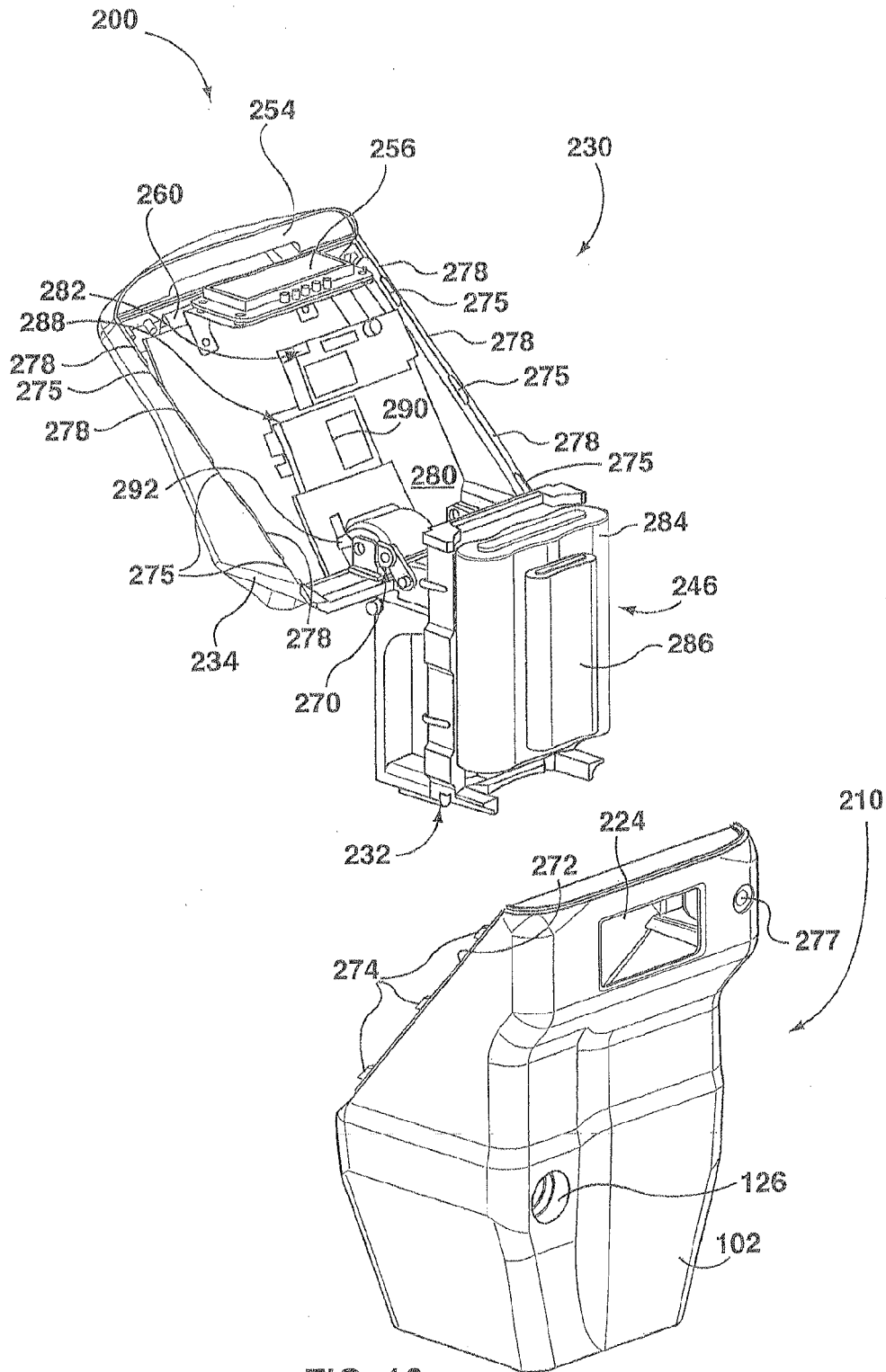


FIG. 10

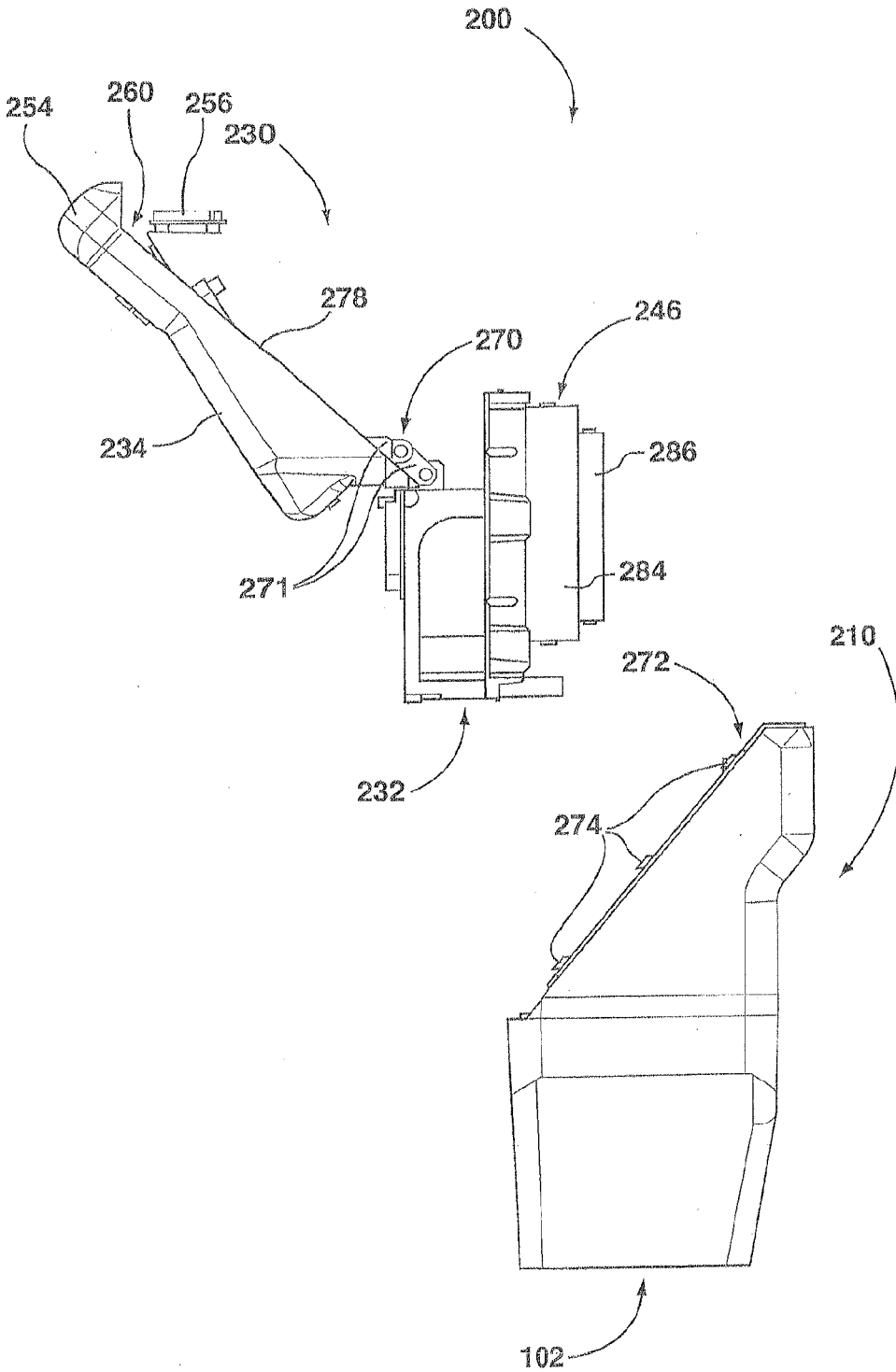


FIG. 11

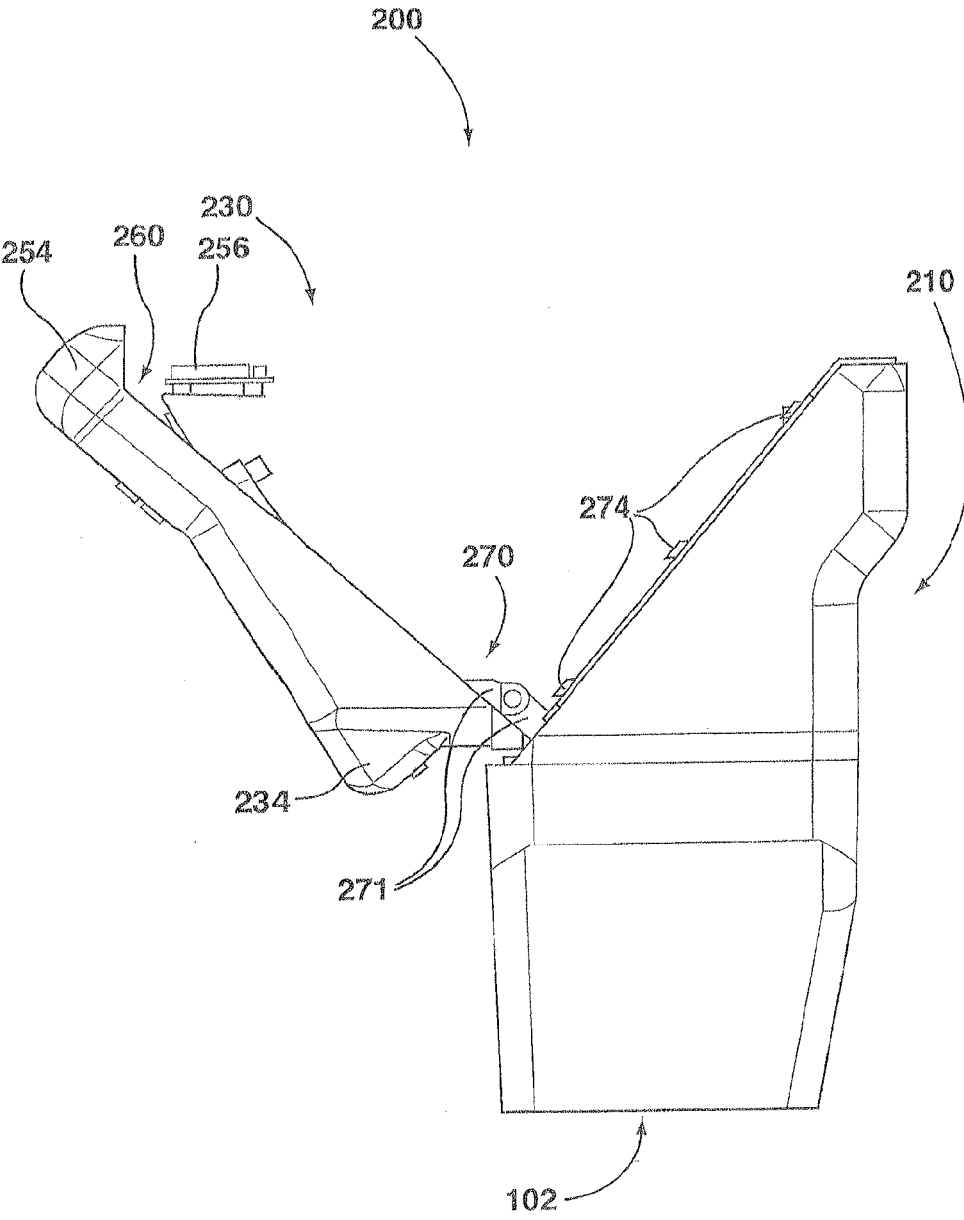


FIG. 12A

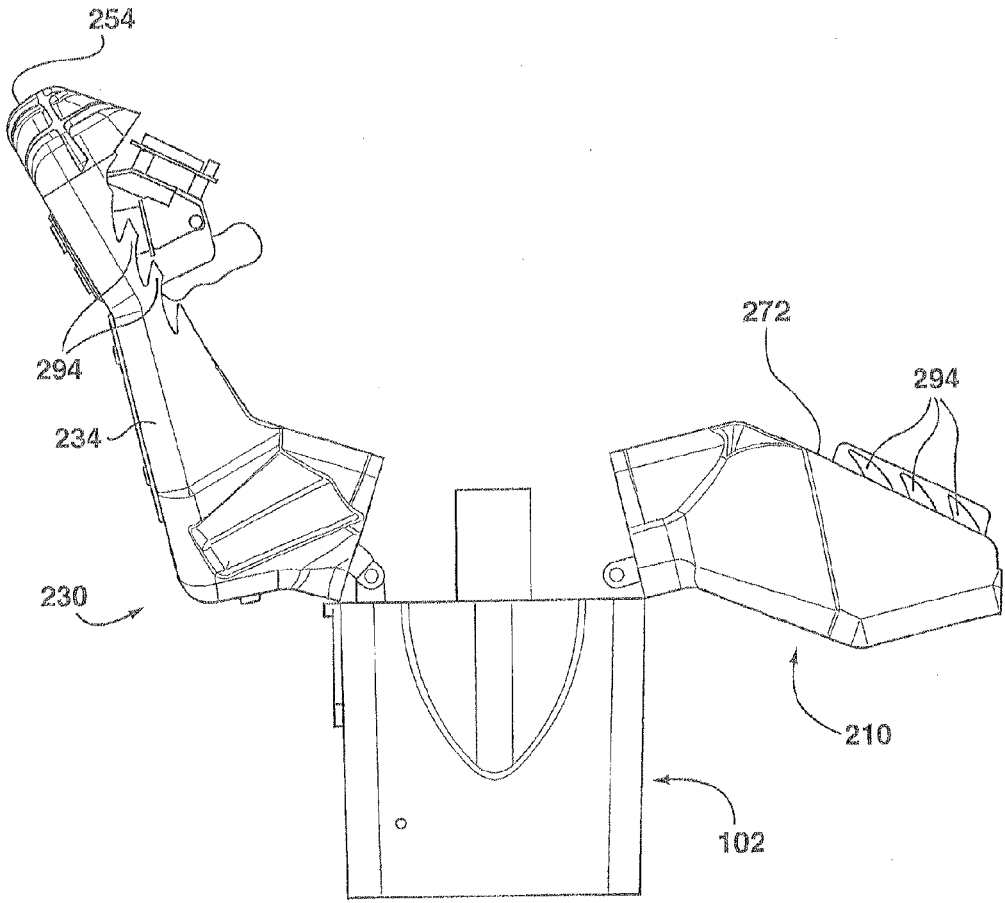


FIG. 12B

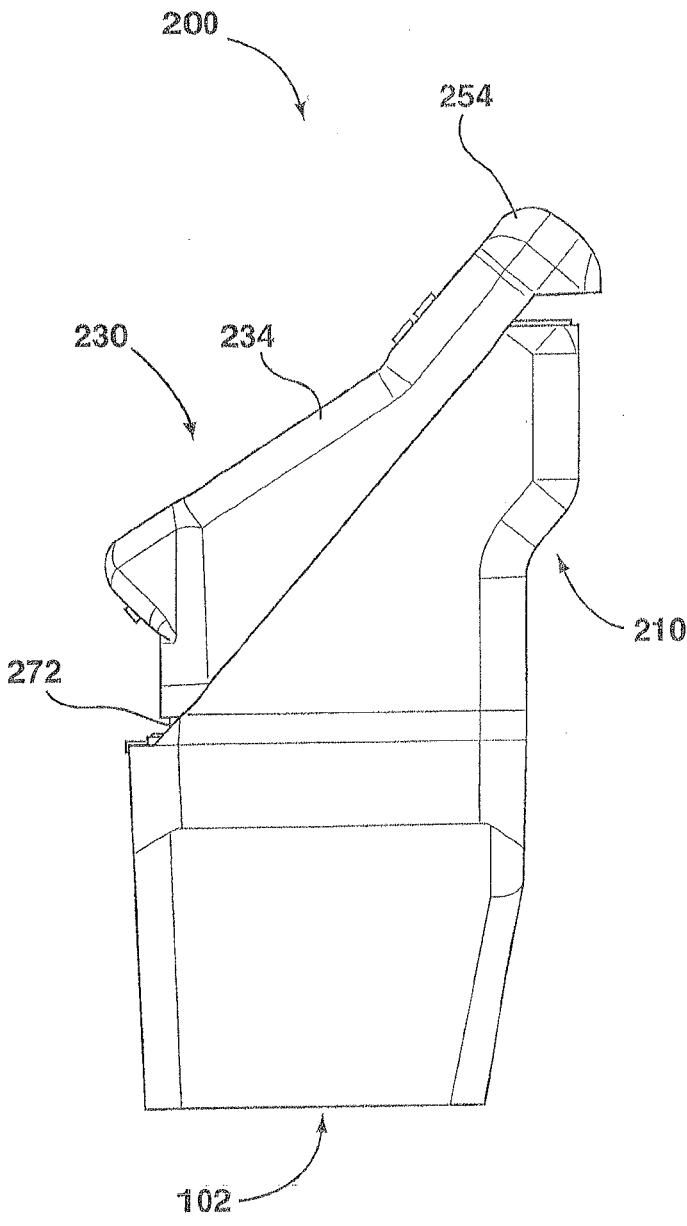


FIG. 13

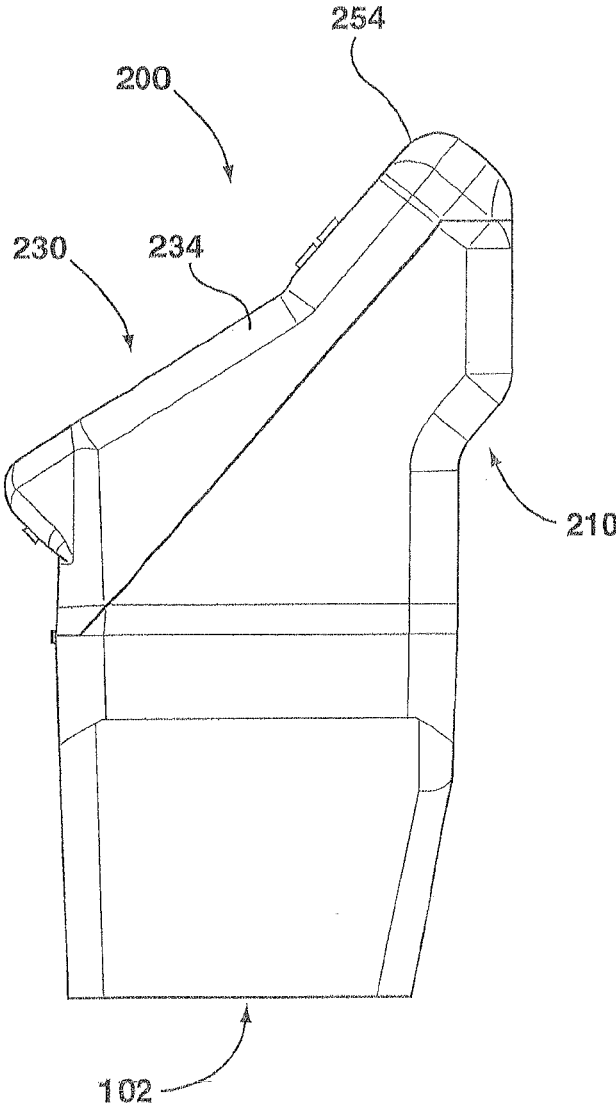


FIG. 14A

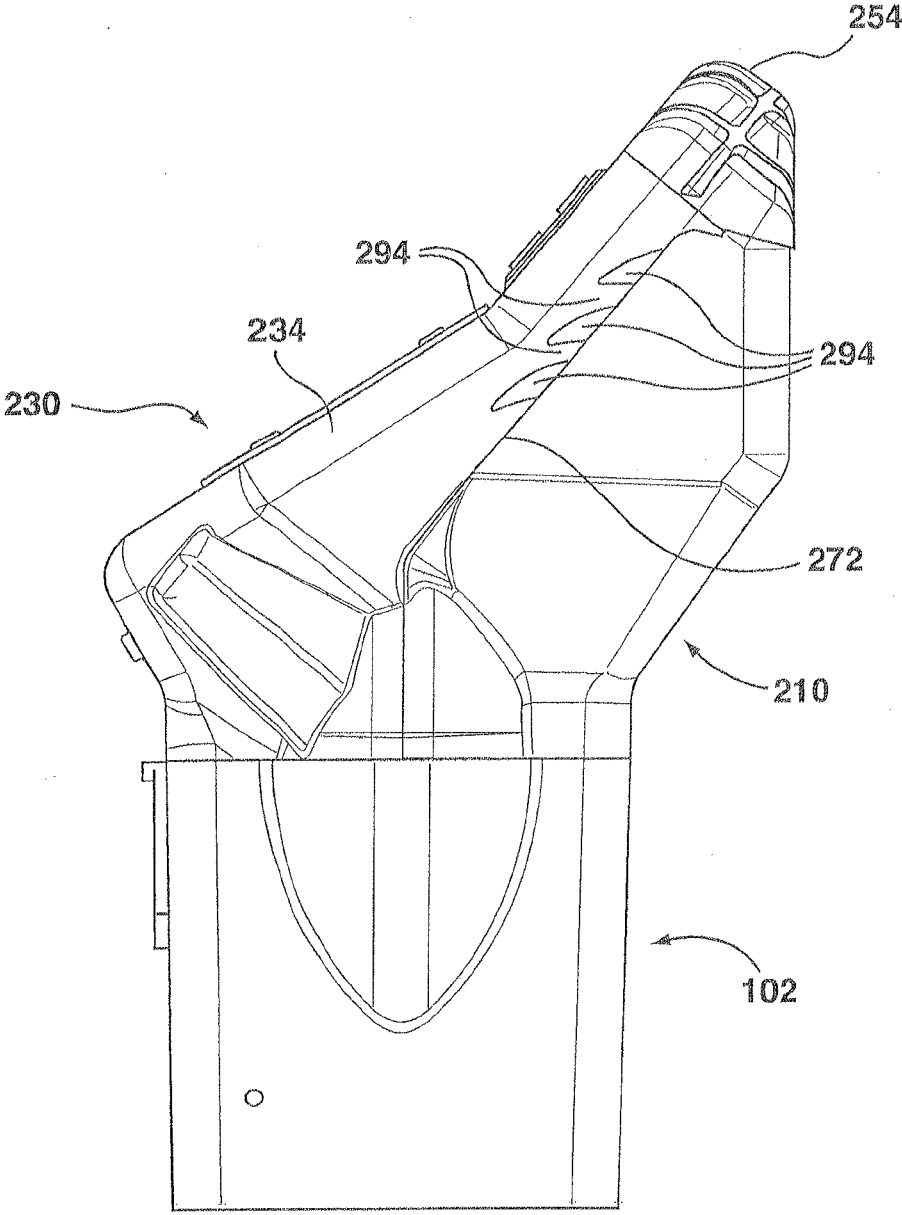


FIG. 14B

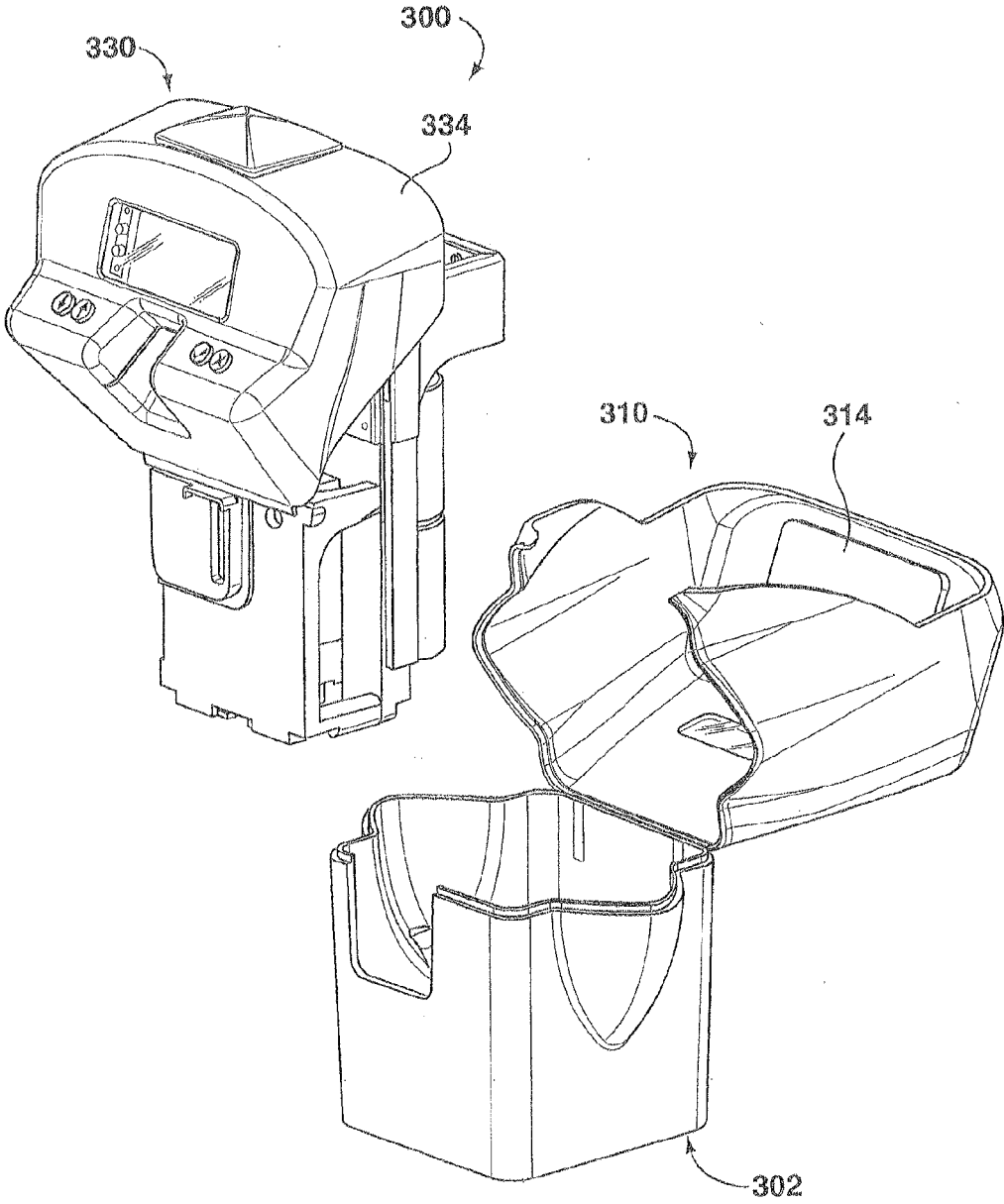


FIG. 15

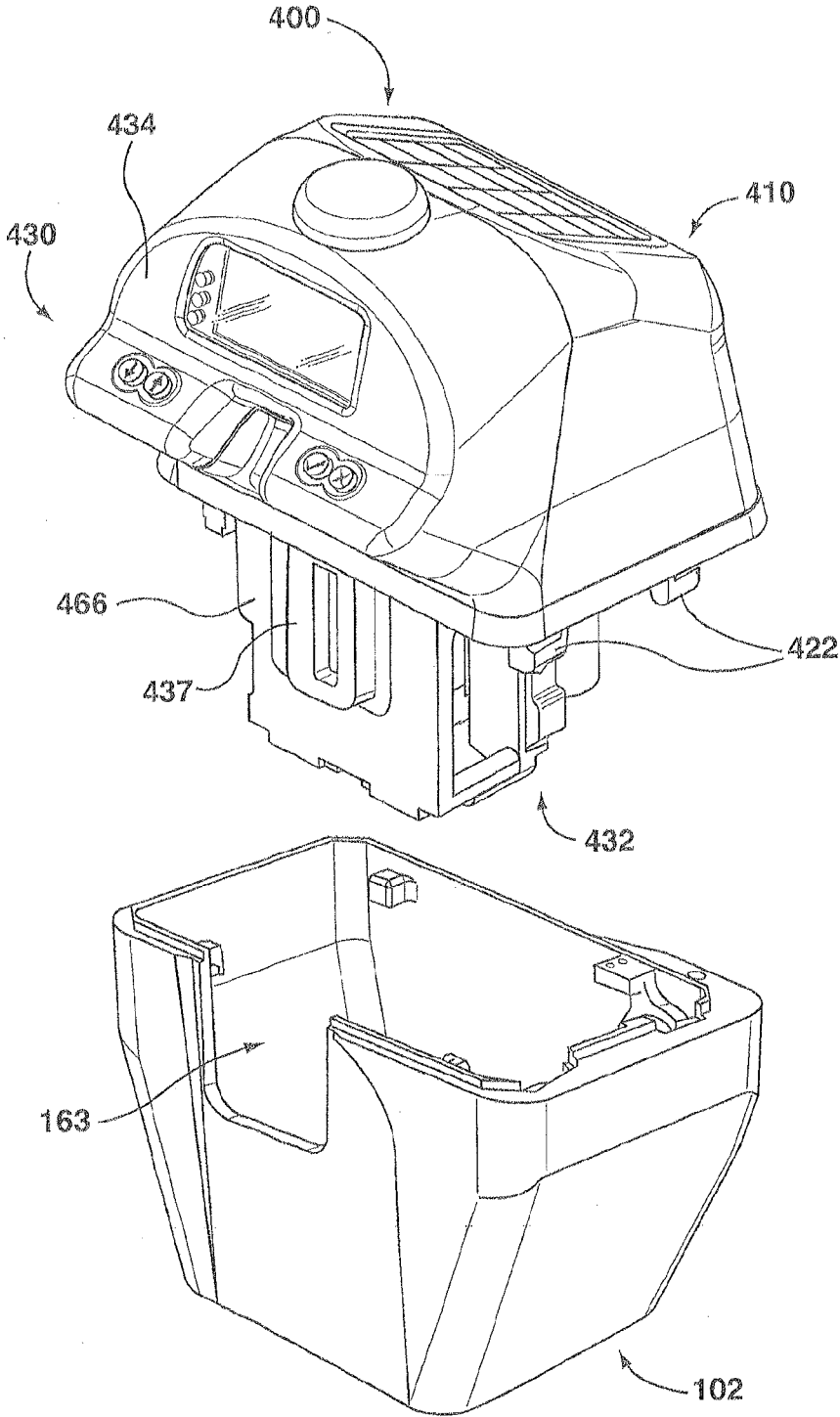


FIG. 16

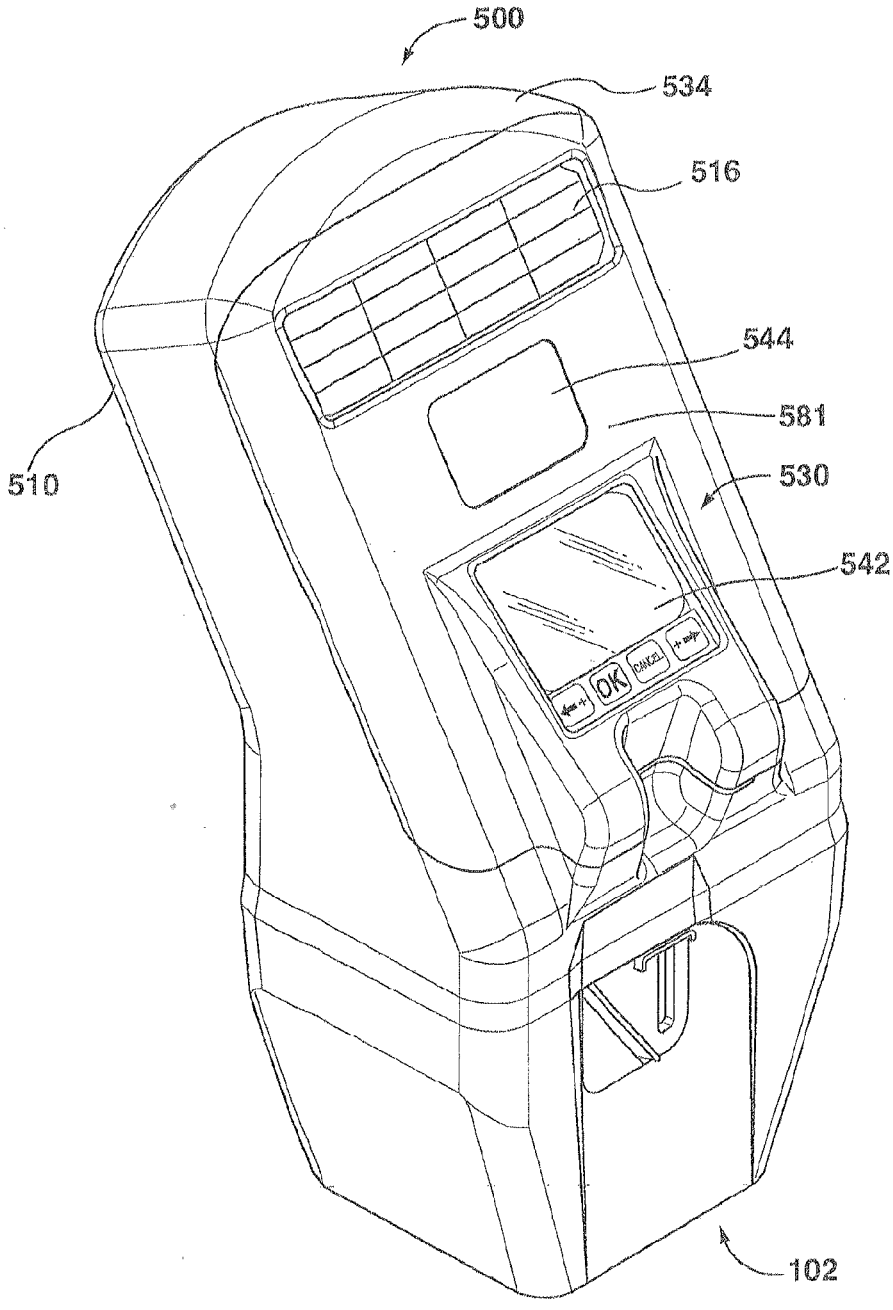


FIG. 17

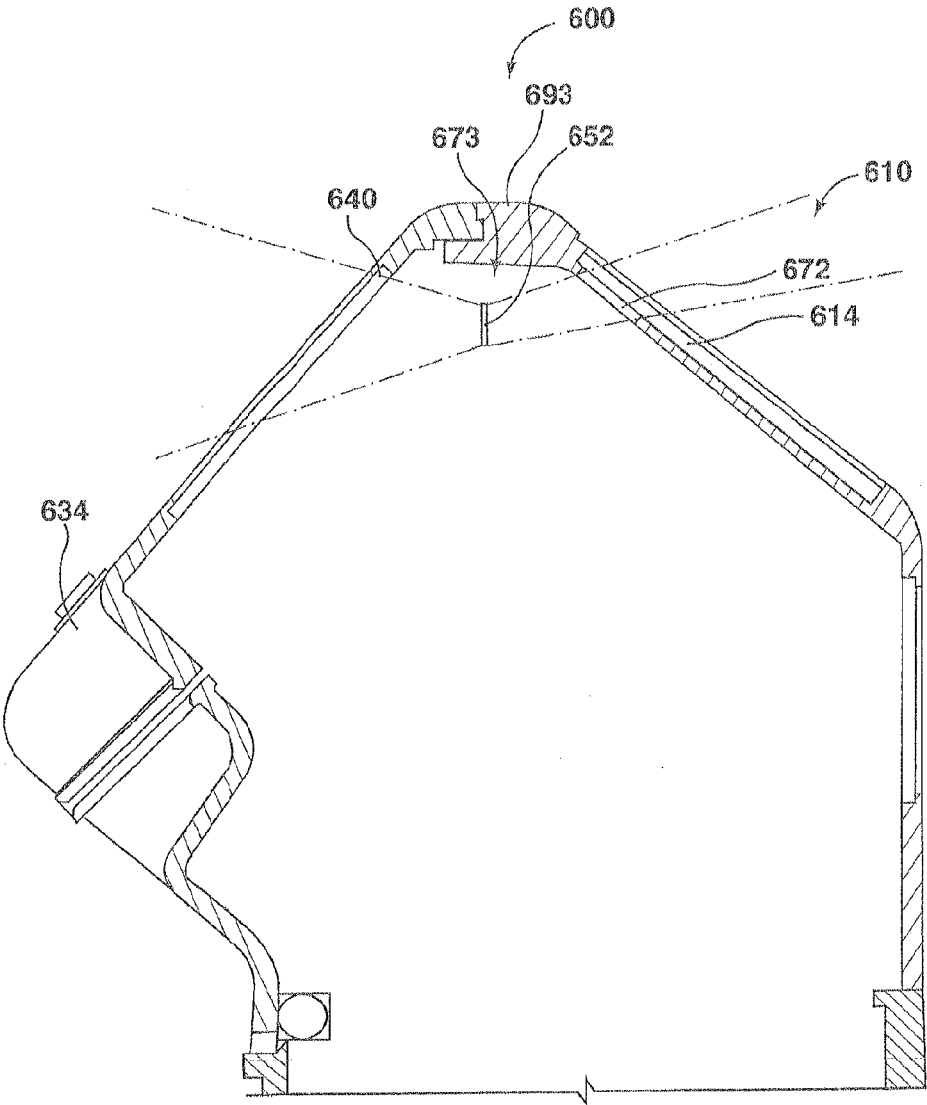


FIG. 18

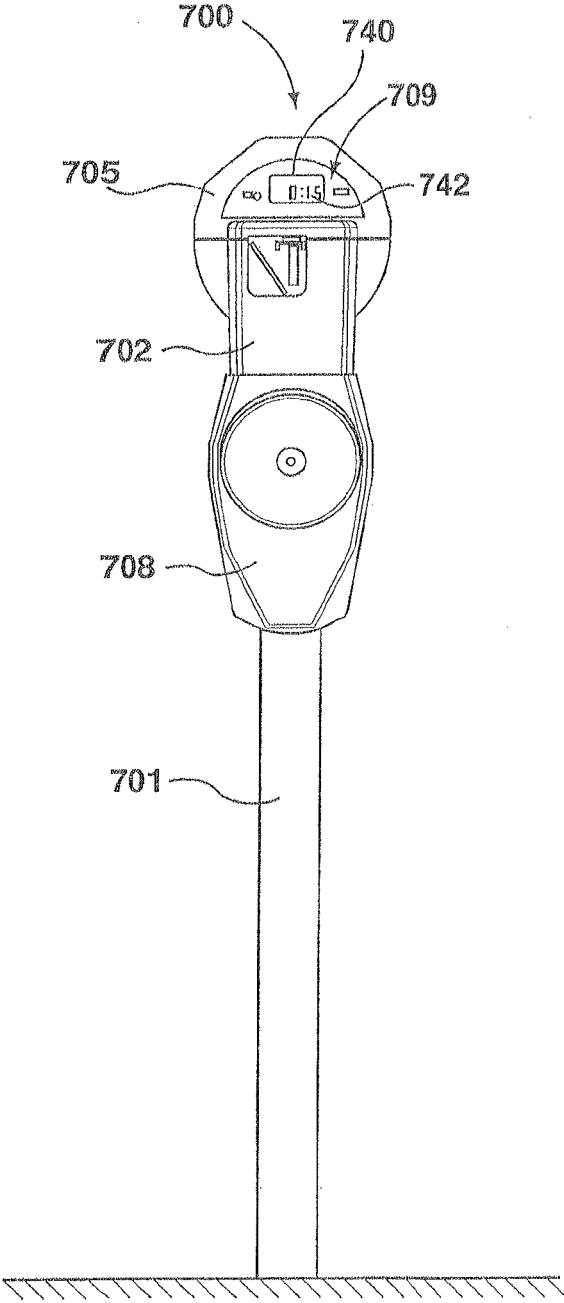


FIG. 19 (Prior Art)

SINGLE SPACE PARKING METER AND REMOVABLE SINGLE SPACE PARKING METER MECHANISM

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application is continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/220,228, filed Jul. 26, 2016, which application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/325,134, filed Jul. 7, 2014, now U.S. Pat. No. 9,443,236, which application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/410,831, filed Mar. 2, 2012, now U.S. Pat. No. 8,770,371, which application in turn claims priority from Canadian Patent Application Serial No. 2733110, filed Mar. 3, 2011, and Canadian Patent Application Serial No. 2756489, filed Oct. 28, 2011, the disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present disclosure relates to single space parking meters and removable single space parking meter mechanisms.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Parking meters come in many shapes and sizes but are generally divided into two main types or classes: multi-space parking meters which are typically larger devices capable of managing the parking payment and control for typically between six or more, or possibly even hundreds of parking spaces; and, single-space parking meters which are typically small devices capable of managing the parking payment and control of a single parking space, but also sometimes additional spaces, such as two, four, or six spaces which are located in close proximity to the parking meter.

[0004] FIG. 19 depicts a single space parking meter 700 installed on a pole 701. Single space parking meter mechanisms are typically installed in a protective housing on a pole 701 near a parking space. The protective housing components, which are directly exposed to the elements and the public, are traditionally separate from the actual parking meter mechanism (not shown). The protective housing components of previous single space parking meters 700 typically comprise a lower housing 702 that receives a removable parking meter mechanism. A cover cap 705 is placed over the parking meter mechanism and secured to the lower housing 702. The cover cap 705 typically comprises a semicircular opening 709, covered by a transparent material, through which a display 742 is visible through a display opening 740 of the parking meter mechanism. The lower housing 702 is typically secured to a coin vault 708 for storing coins received during operation of the parking meter 700. The coin vault 708 may be secured to the pole 701. The parking meter 700 is operated by inserting payment, either in the form of coins or payment cards such as chip cards or electronic purse cards, into the parking meter 700 which then displays and counts down the purchased amount of parking time.

[0005] Single space parking meters are often located in unattended areas, and as such vandalism, tampering and theft are of concern. The protective housing, which typically comprises the lower housing 702 and the cover cap 705, provides protection for the components of the parking meter

mechanism from vandalism, tampering and theft, as well as protection from the environment.

[0006] Single space parking meters may comprise a parking meter mechanism that provides communication, either wired or wireless, with a remote location. The communication means can enable the single space parking meter to accept credit card payments or other types of payments requiring authorization from a remote computer system.

[0007] Although previous parking meters may provide sufficient or acceptable operation, an improved parking meter and parking meter mechanism is desired that provides one or more of a more secure parking meter, a more convenient to use parking meter, an easier to manufacture and assemble parking meter, an easier to remove, replace or service parking meter mechanism, and a more power efficient parking meter mechanism.

SUMMARY

[0008] There is disclosed a removable single space parking meter mechanism comprising an internal structure to be at least partially and removably received within a lower housing of a single space parking meter, and a front housing, to be exposed to an external environment, coupled to the internal structure and comprising a display opening.

[0009] There is further disclosed a single space parking meter comprising a lower housing; a removable single space parking meter mechanism and a back housing secured to the lower housing and the removable single space parking meter mechanism. The removable single space parking meter mechanism comprises an internal structure to be at least partially and removably received within the lower housing; and a front housing, exposed to an external environment, coupled to the internal structure and comprising a display opening.

[0010] There is still further disclosed a method of assembling a single space parking meter comprising placing a removable parking meter mechanism having a pivotally attached front housing at least partially in a lower housing having a back housing secured to the lower housing; pivoting the front housing towards the back housing; and securing the front housing to the back housing to provide a protective housing of the parking meter.

[0011] There is further still disclosed a single space parking meter comprising: a lower housing; a removable single space parking meter mechanism comprising an internal structure at least partially and removably received within a lower housing of a single space parking meter; a housing coupled to the lower housing and the removable single space parking meter mechanism; and a solar panel arranged on an exterior surface of the housing of the single space parking meter.

[0012] There is yet further disclosed a single space parking meter comprising: a lower housing; a removable single space parking meter mechanism, and a housing coupled to the lower housing and the removable single space parking meter mechanism. The removable single space parking meter mechanism comprises an internal structure at least partially and removably received within a lower housing of a single space parking meter; and a plurality of parking meter mechanism components coupled to the internal structure, the plurality of parking meter mechanism components comprising a display for displaying parking information; and a contactless payment reader located behind the display.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] Further features and advantages will become apparent from the following detailed description, taken in combination with the appended drawings, in which:

[0014] FIG. 1 is an upper front perspective of components of a parking meter;

[0015] FIG. 2 is an upper rear perspective of components of the parking meter of FIG. 1;

[0016] FIG. 3 is an upper front perspective of the parking meter of FIG. 1 partially assembled;

[0017] FIG. 4 is a side view of the parking meter of FIG. 1 partially assembled;

[0018] FIG. 5 is an upper rear perspective of the parking meter of FIG. 1 assembled;

[0019] FIG. 6 is an upper front perspective of the parking meter of FIG. 1 assembled;

[0020] FIG. 7 is an upper rear perspective of the parking meter of FIG. 1 assembled;

[0021] FIG. 8 is an upper front perspective of an assembled further parking meter;

[0022] FIG. 9 is an upper front perspective of components of the parking meter of FIG. 8;

[0023] FIG. 10 is an upper rear perspective of components of the parking meter of FIG. 8;

[0024] FIG. 11 is a side view of components of the parking meter of FIG. 8;

[0025] FIG. 12A is a side view of components of the parking meter of FIG. 8 partially assembled;

[0026] FIG. 12B is a side view of components of a further parking meter partially assembled;

[0027] FIG. 13 is a side view of components of the parking meter of FIG. 8 partially assembled;

[0028] FIG. 14A is a side view of the parking meter of FIG. 8 assembled;

[0029] FIG. 14B is a side view of the parking meter of FIG. 12B assembled;

[0030] FIG. 15 is an upper front perspective of components of a further parking meter;

[0031] FIG. 16 is an upper front perspective of components of a further parking meter;

[0032] FIG. 17 is an upper front perspective of a further parking meter;

[0033] FIG. 18 is a cross section of a further parking meter; and

[0034] FIG. 19 is a schematic showing an installed previous single space parking meter.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0035] FIGS. 1-7 depict various views of an embodiment of a single space parking meter 100. Although described herein as a single space parking meter, the parking meter may manage the parking payment and control of more than a single parking space, for example one parking space to the left of the parking meter and one to the right. Although single space parking meters may be associated with a single parking space or multiple spaces, the term is used to differentiate the parking meter type from multi-space 'pay and display' or 'pay by space' type meters. The single space parking meters may be associated with multiple adjacent parking spaces and manage the parking payment and control of, and display the parking time remaining for, the parking spaces.

[0036] The single space parking meter 100 comprises a lower housing 102, a back housing 110 and a removable parking meter mechanism 130. The parking meter mechanism 130 may be partially received within the lower housing 102, which is typically secured to a coin vault (not shown) that is mounted on a pole (not shown) when in use. The back housing 110, the parking meter mechanism 130 and the lower housing 102 are generally locked or secured together to form a protective housing that provides protection from the environment, theft and vandalism. The back housing 110 can be locked to the lower housing 102, thereby securing the parking meter mechanism 130 in the lower housing 102.

[0037] When the parking meter 100 is assembled, that is the parking meter mechanism 130 is, at least partially, placed in the lower housing 102 and the back housing 110 is secured to the lower housing 102, the components of the parking meter mechanism 130 are protected from the environment, vandalism, tampering, theft or other unauthorized access. As described further herein, the parking meter mechanism 130 may include a front housing 134 with a display opening 140 through which the display 142 is visible. The parking meter mechanism 130 may include a contactless payment reader (not shown) located behind the display 142. The back housing 110 of the parking meter 100 may comprise a solar panel 116 arranged on the back housing 110. The solar panel 116 may be enclosed within a solar panel compartment 114 of the back housing 110. The solar panel compartment 114 may have a substantially intact bottom surface (not shown), so that the protection provided by the back housing 110 is not reduced or compromised by a large opening for the solar panel 116.

[0038] With respect to the parking meter mechanism 130, it will be appreciated that the parking meter mechanism 130 may be partially received within a lower housing 102 of various sizes, shapes and configurations. Regardless of the lower housing 102 the parking meter mechanism 130 can be placed in, it is desirable for the parking meter mechanism 130 to be easily removed from the lower housing 102 to allow replacement or servicing of the parking meter mechanism 130. This easy removal allows for a non-functioning parking meter mechanism to be repaired or replaced with a different and functioning parking meter mechanism. The non-functioning parking meter mechanism may then be repaired or replaced without leaving a parking meter unusable and a parking space not managed nor controlled.

[0039] The parking meter mechanism 130 is provided with an internal structure 132 that provides a mounting point for other components of the parking meter mechanism 130. The internal structure 132 may comprise one or more components such as frames or sub-frames, and provides a structure to which the front housing 134 is mounted as well as other components of the parking meter mechanism 130 such as the display 142, main control board (not shown), power source 146 and payment means (not shown). Furthermore, the internal structure 132 provides a structure that is at least partially, and removably, received within the lower housing 102. The internal structure 132 may be provided in various ways. As depicted, the internal structure 132 includes at least a main support frame 162 to which additional components of the internal structure 132 as well as components of the parking meter mechanism 130 may be mounted. The internal structure 132 may comprise additional mounting components such as, for example sub-frame 164 to which an auxiliary display 156 is mounted. The internal structure 132

may also comprise, for example, a mechanism cover plate **166** that is secured over one or more components, such as a coin chute (not shown), and includes a coin slot **136** for receiving coins into the coin chute. Further still, the internal structure **132** may include surfaces of components of the parking meter mechanism **130** mounted to the internal structure **132**. For example, although the front housing **134** is connected to the internal structure **132**, an interior surface of the front housing **134** may form part of the internal structure **132** and be used to mount components of the parking meter mechanism **130**. Thus, actual components of the parking meter mechanism **130** may act as mounting surfaces for other components of the parking meter mechanism **130** such that those actual components of the parking meter mechanism **130** form part of internal structure **132**.

[0040] The parking meter mechanism **130** may comprise various components depending on the desired functionality of the parking meter **100**. The components of the parking meter mechanism **130** will typically comprise a display **142** adjacent the display opening **140** of the parking meter mechanism **130** to display parking meter related information, such as the amount of parking time purchased or remaining, the current time of day, the parking rate, days/hours of operation and other information. The components of the parking meter mechanism **130** may further comprise a main control board (not shown) for controlling the overall operation of the parking meter mechanism **130**, as well as a power source **146**, such as a battery pack and/or a rechargeable battery pack coupled to at least the main control board (not shown) to provide power during operation.

[0041] The parking meter mechanism **130** will further typically include a coin chute (not shown) for receiving coins through a coin slot **136** in the front housing **134** of the parking meter mechanism **130**. The components of the parking meter mechanism **130** may further comprise a card payment component (not shown) for receiving payment by a payment card inserted into a card slot **138** of the front housing **134**. Depending on the communication abilities of the parking meter **100**, the payment card may be a credit card, debit card, chip card or other type of payment card such as an electronic purse card. Payment cards requiring a personal identification number (PIN) to be entered are not considered in detail; however, such payment cards requiring a PIN to be entered may be accepted by the parking meter **100** where, for example, the display **142** comprises touchscreen technology for displaying touchscreen buttons (not shown) associated with at least digits 0-9. Such a display **142** may also be able to present a user with a choice of touchscreen buttons associated with a combination of alpha and/or numeric characters. For example, such a touchscreen display **142** may allow the parking meter **100** to prompt the user to input a PIN, a vehicle license plate number, or a parking space identifier that contains alpha characters, numeric characters, and/or a combination of both alpha and numeric characters, as the case may be. Although the parking meter **100** includes both a coin chute and a card payment component, it is not required to have both. The parking meter **100** may accept payment by way of a number of means. The means could be the coin chute, card payment component or other means such as a communication message received wirelessly indicating that a payment has been made for the parking meter **100**. Such other payment means may allow payment to be made in various alternative ways such as using a cell phone.

[0042] The payment means may further comprise a contactless type payment method, such as a radio frequency identification (RFID) type card, near-field communications (NFC) devices, or other cards adhering to the international standard for contactless cards ISO14443.

[0043] Previous single space parking meters have included a contactless type payment method using a contactless payment reader. However, there were disadvantages associated with the placement of contactless payment readers within previous single space parking meters, including the difficulty in providing adequate space to place a contactless payment reader and instructions to a user, while still offering other payment means. The parking meter mechanism **130** includes a contactless payment reader (not shown) located directly behind the display **142**, which allows for payment by way of a contactless payment device (not shown). The display **142** is located close enough to the exterior of the parking meter **100** such that the contactless payment reader is able to read contactless payment devices placed over the display **142**. The maximum read distance between the contactless payment device and the contactless payment reader is typically a function of the size of the antenna (not shown) of the contactless payment reader, the presence of any material, and its nature if present, between the contactless payment reader and the contactless payment device, and other operating conditions of the parking meter **100**. A high percentage success rate for reading of contactless payment devices by the contactless payment reader through the display **142** can be accomplished even with a double layer of a clear protective cover placed over the display **142**. Since the contactless payment reader is placed behind the display **142**, which is significantly more transparent to the wireless signals used by the contactless payment reader than housing components of the parking meter **100**, which are typically made of metal, no additional openings or apertures need to be included in the housing components to provide adequate operation of the contactless payment reader. Thus, by placing the contactless payment reader behind the display **142**, it is possible to provide housing components that provide greater security and environmental protection. When making payment using the contactless payment reader, the display **142** may be used to display a logo, graphic and/or directions such as "tap here".

[0044] By placing the contactless payment reader (not shown) behind the display **142**, the amount of space required to offer this method of payment is reduced, as the need of an additional opening or aperture in the housing components is eliminated. In addition, the display **142** and possible protective covering of the display **142** provide protection and ruggedness so as to allow the contactless payment reader to be deployed in unattended single space parking meters without the need for additional protection. Additionally, by placing the contactless payment reader behind the display **142**, the physical packaging of the parking meter mechanism **130** may be reduced to provide more freedom in the design of the parking meter **100**, possibly allowing a smaller more appealing single space parking meter, which may be desirable given the large number of single space parking meters that may be present on a single street or block.

[0045] The protective external surface of the front housing **134**, which will be exposed to the environment and the public, may be connected to the internal structure **132** in various ways. For example, the front housing **134** may be bolted, screwed or welded to the internal structure **132**. If the

front housing 134 is bolted or screwed to the internal structure 132, it is desirable to have the bolts or screws accessible only when the parking meter mechanism 130 is not in the fully assembled position as is shown in FIGS. 6 and 7. If the bolts or screws connecting the front housing 134 to the internal structure 132 are accessible from the exterior of the parking meter 100, it is desirable to make the driver pattern an uncommon pattern so that they cannot readily be loosened by an unauthorized person. The front housing 134 may be connected to the internal structure 132 in additional or alternative ways, such as welding, gluing, cementing, riveting, or other connecting techniques. Alternatively, the front housing 134 may be connected to the internal structure 132 during the fabrication stage of the components, such as by casting a single component.

[0046] The front housing 134 that is connected to the internal structure 132 includes a display opening 140 that is arranged to allow a user to view the display 142 when the parking meter 100 is in use, and make payment using contactless payment devices. The display opening 140 may be provided with a transparent, or semi transparent, protective display covering (not shown) such as Lexan™ or similar material. If the display 142 itself provides sufficient strength to resist vandalism, the protective display covering may not be required.

[0047] By connecting the front housing 134 to the internal structure 132 so that they are removable as a single parking meter mechanism 130, less constraints may be placed on the size and shape of the front housing 134. The tolerances required between components of the parking meter mechanism 130 and the front housing 134 can be reduced. No clearance needs to be provided between the components of the parking meter mechanism 130 and the front housing 134, since there may be no relative movement between the front housing 134 and the components of the parking meter mechanism 130.

[0048] If the parking meter mechanism 130 includes a card payment component (not shown), the front housing 134 may include a card slot 138 to receive the payment card, such as a credit card, debit card, chip card or other type of payment card such as an electronic purse card, and allow the payment card to come into contact with a card payment component.

[0049] Depending on the type of interface provided by the parking meter mechanism 130, it may be necessary to provide one or more input controls 150. The input controls 150 are depicted as mechanical buttons for increasing or decreasing the amount of time purchased as well as authorizing or canceling the transaction, such as authorizing or canceling a credit card payment. It will be appreciated that the input controls 150 may be used for additional functions, such as selecting options during configuration of the parking meter mechanism 130, or selecting which parking space payment is being made for. It will be appreciated that the input controls 150 may comprise a variety of switch types such as simple electromechanical switches, piezoelectric switches or capacitive touch switches that have no moving parts.

[0050] If the parking meter mechanism 130 includes the ability to communicate wirelessly, an antenna (not shown) located under an antenna cover 154 is required to transmit and receive information. The size and type of antenna will depend on the intended use, the required communication distance, the frequency and/or the wireless network chosen,

for example using either licensed cellular radio modems or unlicensed radio modems operating in the industrial scientific medical (ISM) bands. Regardless of the wireless network chosen, it is desirable, from a transmission/reception point of view, to have the antenna located above the front housing 134, as well as any other housing components such as the back housing 110 or lower housing 102. The housing components 102, 110, 134 are typically made of metal and attenuate the radio signals transmitted or received by the antenna. Additionally, by locating the antenna above the front housing, the housing components may shield the components of the parking meter mechanism 130 from the transmitted radio signals, which may reduce the amount of electromagnetic shielding required for components of the parking meter mechanism 130 such as a radio module. By placing the antenna external to the housing components, which provides electromagnetic shielding, spurious emissions may be reduced. In previous parking meters 700, which used a cover cap 705 that included a semi-circular opening 709, the placement of the antenna (not shown) on a top surface of the exterior of the parking meter 700 was not ideal since it was subject to vandalism. Furthermore, if the antenna was attached to the cover cap 705, the antenna would then need to be detached from the parking meter mechanism when removing the cover cap 705, or alternatively, the antenna would need to be detached from the cover cap 705, when removing the parking meter mechanism.

[0051] The parking meter mechanism 130 has a front housing 134 that is connected to an internal structure 132 of the parking meter mechanism 130. As such, it is not necessary to detach the front housing 134 in order to remove the parking meter mechanism 130 from the lower housing 102. As a result, it is possible to place the antenna (not shown) in a desirable location, from a transmission/reception point of view, on a top surface of the parking meter 100, without making removal or replacement of the parking meter mechanism 130 more difficult. By placing the antenna above the housing components 102, 110, 134 of the parking meter 100, the antenna may transmit and/or receive radio signals equally well from all directions. Furthermore, since the antenna does not need to transmit radio signals through the housing components 102, 110, 134 of the parking meter, it may be possible to transmit and receive radio signals the same distance using less power, or alternatively transmit and receive radio signals a greater distance using the same power.

[0052] The antenna (not shown) may be mounted on the exterior of the front housing 134 and may only require a small opening in the front housing 134 to pass a wire through for coupling the antenna to the radio module (not shown). The antenna and any opening in the front housing 134 for the antenna, or connections between the antenna and radio module, may be covered by an antenna cover 154. Mounting the antenna in this manner minimizes or reduces the need for additional protection from vandalism. Even if an antenna cover 154 is compromised, the front housing 134 remains substantially intact. The antenna cover 154 may comprise a hard plastic material that is transparent, or semi transparent to radio signals, so that the radio signals transmitted and received by the antenna are not greatly attenuated. The antenna cover 154 may snap onto the front housing 134 using one or more tabs (not shown) cooperating with corresponding slots (not shown) in the front housing 134. An

antenna placed in such a manner will have no metal obstacles, allowing it to send or receive radio signals in or from any direction.

[0053] The parking meter mechanism 130 is at least partially received within the lower housing 102. The lower housing 102 is typically secured to a coin vault (not shown) secured to a post (not shown). A back housing 110 engages with the lower housing 102 in order to secure the parking meter mechanism 130 at least partially within the lower housing 102.

[0054] The back housing 110 may comprise one or more securing points 122 that interact with one or more corresponding securing points 104 and/or moveable securing point 106 located on the lower housing 102. The moveable securing point 106 may move between a locked position and an unlocked position. In the locked position the moveable securing point 106 and the corresponding securing points 104 of the lower housing 102 engage with securing points 122 of the back housing 110 to lock the back housing in position.

[0055] In the unlocked position, the moveable securing point 106 does not engage the securing points 122 on the back housing 110. The back housing 110 is able to be moved relative to the lower housing 102 (see gap 167 of FIG. 5) such that the corresponding securing points 104 also do not engage the securing points 122 on the back housing 110, allowing the back housing 110 to be removed from the lower housing 102.

[0056] A lock (not shown) can be received within a lock retaining opening 126 in the lower housing 102 so that the moveable securing point 106 may be operated, and locked in position.

[0057] In addition to the securing points 122 that interact with the corresponding securing points 104 and moveable securing point 106 of the lower housing 102, the back housing 110 may also comprise one or more engagement points or surfaces (not shown) for engaging with corresponding points or surfaces (not shown) of the parking meter mechanism 130 and further securing the parking meter mechanism 130 within the lower housing 102.

[0058] The back housing 110 may have an auxiliary display opening 124 for allowing an auxiliary display 156 to be visible from the exterior of the parking meter 100. The auxiliary display 156 may provide an additional display of information, such as if the parking time purchased has expired, the parking meter 100 is out of service, or if parking is not allowed at that time.

[0059] The back housing 110 may include a solar panel compartment 114. The solar panel compartment 114 has a substantially intact bottom surface (not shown) to which a solar panel 116 may be mounted. A clear solar panel cover (not shown) may be provided over the solar panel 116 and solar panel compartment 114 to both secure and to provide further protection to the solar panel 116 if required.

[0060] Previous removable parking meter mechanisms have typically been provided with a solar panel on the parking meter mechanism, if at all. An opening in the protective housing of these previous parking meters was required to allow light to contact the solar panel of the parking meter mechanism. Such an arrangement requires a large opening to be provided in the protective housing of the parking meter, which may reduce the protection from the environment, vandalism, tampering or theft provided by the protective housing.

[0061] The solar panel compartment 114 of the back housing 110 has a substantially intact bottom surface (not shown), such that even if the solar panel cover (if present) is compromised, as well as the solar panel 116, the back housing 110 is not compromised and can still prevent vandalism or tampering to the parking meter mechanism 130.

[0062] An opening may be provided in the substantially intact bottom surface of the solar panel compartment 114 to allow an electrical connection to be made between the solar panel 116 and the parking meter mechanism 130. The electrical connection may be made by, for example, a wire connected to the solar panel 116, passing through the opening in the solar panel compartment 114 that can be connected to, or disconnected from, the parking meter mechanism 130 as required. Alternatively, electrical contacts, such as spring loaded contacts, may be provided on the interior side of the back housing 110 that are electrically connected to the solar panel 116. The electrical contacts may make an electrical connection with corresponding electrical contacts of the parking meter mechanism 130 when the back housing 110 is engaged with the parking meter mechanism 130 and the lower housing 102.

[0063] With the solar panel 116 in the solar panel compartment 114 of the back housing 110, it is possible to quickly and easily replace the solar panel 116 of a parking meter 100 by simply substituting a new back housing 110. As such, a solar panel 116 that is not performing satisfactorily, whether due to age of the solar panel 116, or vandalism, such as spray paint on the solar panel 116 or solar panel cover (not shown), can be quickly replaced without the need to remove and/or replace the parking meter mechanism 130.

[0064] Various features of a removable parking meter mechanism 130 and an external protective housing provided by housing components 102, 110, 134 have been described above. It will be appreciated that the description has been made with regards to specific embodiments. The described features may be readily adapted from the specific embodiments described to a plurality of other parking meters. Furthermore, individual features of the parking meter 100 described above may be incorporated into different parking meters, either individually or in combination with other features.

[0065] The above has described the parking meter 100 as having a back housing 110 that slides laterally to engage securing points 122 with corresponding securing points 104 and moveable securing point 106 in order to secure the parking meter mechanism 130 within the parking meter 100. It is possible to secure the parking meter mechanism 130, at least partially within the lower housing 102 using other approaches.

[0066] FIGS. 8-14 depict a further embodiment of a single space parking meter. The parking meter 200 includes a front housing 234 that is hingedly connected to an internal structure 232 of the removable parking meter mechanism 230 via a linkage, or plurality of linkages, 270. Each linkage 270 may comprise two linkage arms 271 pivotally connected together, with each linkage arm 271 pivotally connected to a respective one of the front housing 234 and the internal structure 232. The hinged connection of the front housing 234 allows the front housing 234 to be swung forward relative to the back housing 210. The linkage 270 further allows the front housing 234 to slide up and down sloped side surfaces 272 of the back housing 210. This embodiment

may allow components of the parking meter mechanism 230 to be mounted to or affixed to the interior of the front housing 234, which makes electrical connections between components of the parking meter mechanism 230 easier and less prone to wear and tear since there is no relative movement between components of the parking meter mechanism 230 mounted to the interior surface of the front housing 234. Further the servicing of components of the parking meter mechanism 230 may be easier, as they are accessible when the front housing 234 is hinged forward.

[0067] The components of the removable parking meter mechanism 230 may include, in addition to the internal structure 232, a display 242 mounted to an interior surface of the front housing 234. By mounting the display 242 directly to the front housing 234, it is possible to have a smaller display opening 240 in the front housing 234. Since the display 242 is not set back from the display opening 240, as may be the case when a protective housing must move over a display as in previous parking meters where a display is attached directly to a parking meter mechanism, it is not necessary to enlarge the display opening 240 in order to provide adequate visibility from different angles. A contactless card reader or simply a contactless payment antenna 260 for the contactless card reader may be mounted behind the display 242. The contactless payment antenna 260 may comprise a copper trace formed on a printed circuit board that can be mounted on the back side of the display 242. The contactless payment antenna 260 may be connected to a contactless payment reader module (not shown). A main control board 280 may be mounted to the internal surface of the front housing 234, which forms part of the internal structure 232 of the parking meter mechanism 230. The main control board 280 may include a control component, or control components (not shown), for controlling overall operation of the parking meter 200. For example, the control components may include a processor and memory, as well as additional circuitry required for operating the processor and memory, such as a timing clock.

[0068] Mounted to the back side, that is the side away from the front housing 234, of the main control board 280 is a card payment component 288 which may include a chip card reader 290 and/or a magnetic stripe card reader 292. The card payment component 288 is mounted so that a payment card placed into the card slot 238 will make the appropriate connection for reading the payment card. An auxiliary display 256, which may be visible through an auxiliary display opening 224 in the back housing 210, may be mounted to the main control board 280 or the front housing 234.

[0069] In order to allow movement of the front housing 234 required for engaging the front housing 234 to the back housing 210 the mounting of the auxiliary display 256 may be biased by a spring or resilient member so that it may be compressed towards the front housing 234 while closing the front housing 234, and may be biased forward to fit snugly against the auxiliary display opening 224 when the front housing 234 is secured to the back housing 210. An antenna (not shown) may be mounted within an antenna cover 254 that is mounted on a top side of the front housing 234. The antenna may be connected via a wire to a radio module 282. The antenna mounted in the antenna cover 254 is located above a substantially intact surface of the protective housing which is created when the front housing 234 is secured to the back housing 210. Locating the antenna above this substan-

tially intact surface has advantages for transmission and reception of radio signals, as previously described. Furthermore, the substantially intact surface provides electromagnetic shielding for the components of the parking meter mechanism 230, which can reduce the amount of radiated spurious emissions introduced into the radio module 282, improving quality and strength of the transmitting and receiving of radio signals. A power source 246 such as a main battery pack 284 and/or a rechargeable battery pack 286 may be mounted to the internal structure 232 where it is partially received inside the lower housing 102.

[0070] By allowing the front housing 234 to hinge forward with at least some of the attached components of the parking meter mechanism 230, the service and maintenance of the parking meter 200 may be greatly simplified as access to the components of the parking meter mechanism 230 is simplified. For example, when the front housing 234 is hinged forward along with at least some of the attached components of the parking meter mechanism 230, easy access to the coin chute may be provided for inspecting for coins jammed in the coin chute. Similarly, with the parking meter mechanism 230 partially received within the lower housing 102 and the front housing 234 pivoted forward relative to the back housing 210, it is possible to have unobstructed access to most common components of the parking meter mechanism 230 requiring servicing or replacement, including for example, replacement of the power source 246, and/or servicing or replacement of the chip card reader 290 or a magnetic stripe card reader 292.

[0071] Furthermore, by allowing the front housing 234 to hinge forward thus exposing the components of the parking meter mechanism 230, service and maintenance of the parking meter mechanism 230 is possible without necessarily removing the parking meter mechanism 230 from the lower housing 102. Previous removable parking meter mechanisms typically had to be completely removed from a lower housing to perform any servicing, which was made more difficult due to having to hold the parking meter mechanism. In some cases the removed parking meter mechanism had to be placed on a hanger or other surface. Such removal of the parking meter mechanism is more time consuming and increases the risk of damaging the parking meter mechanism. For example, someone servicing and handling a previous parking meter mechanism could damage it by dropping it or otherwise mishandling it. Furthermore, handling of previous parking meter mechanisms could damage delicate display or solar panels located on the parking meter mechanism. Typically, in previous parking meter mechanisms, these delicate components had no protection further than the protective housing, which had to be removed to access the parking meter mechanism. As such, any careless or improper handling of previous parking meter mechanisms could damage these components. In contrast, the removable parking meter mechanism 230 may reduce the likelihood of damage by reducing the need to remove the parking meter mechanism 230 from the lower housing 102. Further, the removable parking meter mechanism 230 includes the front housing 234, which provides protection to other components of the parking meter mechanism 230 from damage even when the parking meter mechanism 230 is removed from the lower housing 102.

[0072] The parking meter 200 further comprises a solar panel 216 on the front housing 234. The solar panel 216 may be mounted in a solar panel compartment 214 on an external

surface of the front housing 234. As depicted, the solar panel compartment 214 may be located below the display 242. Although not visible in the figures, the solar panel compartment 214 has a substantially intact bottom surface that provides additional strength and protection against vandalism. The solar panel compartment 214 may have a small cutout (not shown) provided in the substantially intact bottom surface in order to allow an electrical connection to be made between the solar panel compartment 214 and other components of the parking meter mechanism 230, such as a solar harvesting control module (not shown) responsible for recharging the rechargeable battery pack 286. Additionally the cutout may be sized to allow small circuitry associated with the solar panel 216, such as temperature compensation diodes, to be located on the back of the solar panel 216 while still allowing the solar panel 216 to lie flat in the solar panel compartment 214.

[0073] Locating the solar panel compartment 214 below the display 242 may provide some advantage with respect to orienting the solar panel 216 in a location that is likely to be in sunlight. Parking meters may be placed against other objects such as building walls, post boxes, or utility and light poles. If a solar panel is located on the back of the parking meter in such an installation it is less likely to receive any light. Since the display of the parking meter will always be accessible because a user must be able to interact with the parking meter, locating the solar panel 216 on the front side of the parking meter 200 may increase the likelihood that the solar panel 216 will receive light. Furthermore, with previous 'symmetric' designs, that is parking meters having a side profile that is somewhat symmetric, it is often difficult for a user to quickly identify the front, that is, the side of the parking meter with the display and input controls, of the parking meter. By including the solar panel 216 on the front of the parking meter 200 along with the display 242 and input controls 250, a more asymmetric profile may be provided making use of the parking meter 200 easier and more intuitive. In addition, by including the solar panel 216 on the front housing 234, the parking meter mechanism 230 may be easier to manufacture, assemble and service, since a majority of the components of the parking meter may be located together on the interior surface of the front housing 234 as opposed to in remote and separate locations. Furthermore, having the solar panel compartment 214 and solar panel 216 located on the front housing 234 may make it readily apparent that the parking meter 200 includes a 'green' power source which may be desirable to cities or parking authorities with respect to public relations.

[0074] The parking meter 200 further includes an antenna (not shown) that is mounted above the front housing 234 and within a protective antenna cover 254. The protective antenna cover 254 is elongated to substantially the same width as the top of the front housing 234 of the parking meter 200.

[0075] In contrast to the embodiment described with reference to FIGS. 1-7, the back housing 210 is first placed in the lower housing 102 and then the parking meter mechanism 230 is placed in the parking meter 200. The front housing 234 of the parking meter mechanism 230 is hingedly attached to the internal structure 232 by the linkage 270. The linkage 270 allows the front housing 234 to pivot towards the back housing 210 when the parking meter mechanism 230 is placed in the lower housing 102. The linkage 270 also allows the front housing 234 to slide against

the back housing 210 when the front housing is pivoted to a closed position relative to the back housing 210.

[0076] The back housing 210 may have two sloping side surfaces 272 against which the front housing 234 can slide. Each of the sloping side surfaces 272 comprises one or more finger protrusions 274 that engage and capture corresponding rails or grooves 278 machined into corresponding mating surfaces of the front housing 234 when the front housing 234 slides to the bottom of the back housing 210. In order for the finger protrusions 274 to engage the corresponding rails or grooves 278, matching and machined openings 275 are provided in the corresponding rails or grooves 278 to allow the finger protrusions 274 to slide into the corresponding rails or grooves 278. Once the front housing 234 is pivoted to the top of the back housing 210 and slid down the sloping side surfaces 272 of the back housing 210, an upper lock secured in an upper lock opening 277 can actuate an upper locking mechanism, which may be in the form of a locking cam 276 on the back housing 210 can be engaged to secure the front housing 234 to the back housing 210. The finger protrusions 274, which are engaged to the corresponding rails or grooves 278, prevent the front housing 234 from pivoting away from the back housing 210, while a locking cam 276 prevents upward movement of the front housing 234, which also prevents disengagement of the protruding fingers 274 from the corresponding rails or grooves 278.

[0077] When assembling the parking meter 200, first the back housing 210 is engaged to the lower housing 102. The back housing 210 may be locked to the lower housing 102. After the back housing 210 is engaged to the lower housing 102, the parking meter mechanism 230 is partially received into the lower housing 102 and the front housing 234 which is hinged to the internal structure 232, is pivoted towards the back housing 210 and against the sloping side surfaces 272 of the back housing 210. In order to engage the front housing 234 and the back housing 210 together, the front housing 234 is positioned along the sloping side surfaces 272 of the back housing 210 such that the finger protrusions 274, placed equidistant along the sloping side surfaces 272 of the back housing 210, can be received within the openings 275 located on the corresponding rails or grooves 278 of the front housing 234. Once the finger protrusions 274 are sitting in the openings 275, the sloping side surfaces 272 of the back housing 210 and the corresponding mating surfaces of the front housing 234 are in line and sitting tight against each other. The front housing 234 is then positioned on, for example by sliding down, the sloping side surfaces 272 of the back housing 210 so that the finger protrusions 274 move out of the openings 275 to capture the corresponding rails or grooves 278 machined into the corresponding mating surfaces of the front housing 234. When the front housing 234 has been moved down the sloping side surfaces 272 as far as the front housing 234 will travel, the finger protrusions 274 of the back housing 210 will tightly mate with the corresponding rails or grooves 278 machined into the corresponding mating surfaces of the front housing 234 and will not allow any appreciable separation of the front housing 234 from the back housing 210. Further up or down movement of the front housing 234 relative to the back housing 210 is stopped by engaging the locking cam 276 on the back housing 210.

[0078] Although relative movement between the front housing 234 and the back housing 210 is described as being prevented by the cooperation between the finger protrusions

274 on the back housing 210 and the corresponding rails or grooves 278 machined into the corresponding mating surfaces of the front housing 234, other means may be employed to prevent relative movement between the front housing 234 and the back housing 210 in the parking meter 200 when assembled. For example, the locking cam 276 alone may be sufficient to prevent any significant amount of relative movement between the front housing 234 and the back housing 210 in order to provide a parking meter 200 that is secure from the elements, tampering, vandalism and/or theft.

[0079] In addition, and with reference to FIGS. 12B and 14B, another example of an alternate means to prevent relative movement between the front housing 234 and the back housing 210 in the parking meter 200 when assembled is the incorporation of interlocking fingers 294 along the sloping side surfaces 272 of the back housing 210 and the corresponding mating surfaces of the front housing 234. The use of interlocking fingers 294 may be advantageous where the above-described approach of using finger protrusions 274 on the sloping side surfaces 272 of the back housing 210, and corresponding rails or grooves 278 machined into corresponding mating surfaces of the front housing 234, is either not possible or not desirable. Examples of where the above approach may not be possible or desirable include where an upper locking mechanism is not available or practical such that only a lower locking mechanism that engages with the back housing 210 is available, where sliding the front housing 234 along or against the sloping side surfaces 272 of the back housing 210 is not available or desirable, and/or where it is preferable for both the front housing 234 and the back housing 210 to each pivot outwards to an open/unlocked position and inwards to a closed/lockable position. In those examples, the front housing 234, the back housing 210 and the lower housing 102 may be secured to one another first by hingedly or pivotally securing to the lower housing 102 each of the front housing 234 and back housing 210, second by inwardly pivoting the front housing 234 and back housing 210 to a closed position such that when in the closed position their respective interlocking fingers 294 are engaged, and third by engaging the lower locking mechanism, which secures the back housing 210 to the lower housing 102. Because the back housing 210 is locked and secured to the lower housing 102, and the front housing 234 is secured to the back housing 210 as a result of the interlocking fingers 294 when in the closed position, neither the front housing 234 nor the back housing 210 can pivot outwardly, unless the lower locking mechanism is disengaged. When the lower locking mechanism is disengaged, the back housing 210 is released such that the back housing 210 may pivot outwardly to an open position, which disengages the interlocking fingers 294 and allows for the front housing 234 to pivot outwardly. While the above describes placement of the interlocking fingers 294 along the sloping side surfaces 272 of the back housing 210 and the corresponding mating surfaces of the front housing 234, it is alternatively or additionally possible to secure the front housing 234 and the back housing 210 together by placing the interlocking fingers 294 along a top edge or portion of the front housing 234 and a top edge or portion of the back housing 210.

[0080] With reference again to the embodiment disclosed in FIGS. 8-12A and 13-14A, the finger protrusions 274 of the back housing 210 and the corresponding rails or grooves

278 in the front housing 234 have been described as being machined or formed into the respective housings. The same cooperation between the finger protrusions 274 and the corresponding rails or grooves 278 can be accomplished with similar finger protrusions being instead located on the front housing 234 and the corresponding rails or grooves instead being machined into the back housing 210. Furthermore, the same cooperation between the finger protrusions 274 and corresponding rails or grooves 278 can be accomplished with similar finger protrusion and corresponding rails or grooves instead being discrete metal parts that have been stamped, formed or machined and which are rigidly attached to the front housing 234 and the back housing 210, precluding the requirement for precision machining to be carried out on the front housing and the back housing. Likewise, the above-described interlocking fingers 294 of FIGS. 12B and 14B may also be discrete metal parts.

[0081] Although the front housing 234 has been described as being secured to the back housing 210 through the finger protrusions 274 and/or the locking cam 276, the front housing 234 may be secured to the back housing 210 with a different locking mechanism. For example a pin or protrusion on either the front housing 234 or back housing 210 may be moved into a corresponding opening or securing point in the other housing to prevent the front housing 234 from sliding up or down the back housing 210.

[0082] The back housing 210 may be secured to the lower housing 102 using a lower locking mechanism that prevents lateral movement of the back housing 210 relative to the lower housing 102. For example, the lower locking mechanism may comprise a rotatable cam that is rotated upwards and interferes with one or more of the securing points 222 preventing lateral movement of the back housing 210 relative to the lower housing 102.

[0083] The parking meter 200 may comprise two separate locking mechanisms, an upper locking mechanism in the back housing 210 for securing the front housing 234 and the parking meter mechanism 230 to the back housing 210 and a lower locking mechanism in the lower housing 102 for securing the back housing 210 to the lower housing 102. The two locking mechanisms may be actuated by respective upper and lower locks. Alternatively, a single lock may be used, for example in the lower housing 102, to simultaneously actuate both the upper locking mechanism and the lower locking mechanism. For example, rotating a cam of the lower locking mechanism may cause a locking pin of the upper locking mechanism to protrude up from the back housing 210 and into a corresponding hole in the front housing 234.

[0084] As described herein, a front housing, which comprises an external surface, will be exposed to the environment and to the public, is coupled to an internal structure making it an integral part of the removable parking meter mechanism while forming a component of the protective housing. As such, rigid and secure mounting of components of the parking meter mechanism within the removable parking meter mechanism, including mounting of components of the parking meter mechanism to an inside surface of the front housing, is possible.

[0085] FIG. 15 provides an embodiment of a parking meter 300 that comprises a removable parking meter mechanism 330 that can be received into a lower housing 302. The parking meter mechanism 330 is similar to the parking meter mechanism 130 described above with reference to FIGS.

1-7. A lower housing 302, as well as the front housing 334 of the parking meter mechanism 330, may be adapted to allow the back housing 310 to be hingedly connected to the lower housing 302. The back housing 310 may still comprise a solar panel compartment 314; however the securing points 122 on the back housing 110, and the corresponding securing points 104 and the movable securing point 106 on the lower housing 102 as described above with reference to FIGS. 1 to 7 may not be required.

[0086] As described above with reference to FIGS. 1 to 7, the parking meter mechanism 130 is first placed in the lower housing 102 and then a back housing 110 is locked in place, securing the parking meter mechanism 130 in the lower housing 102. In contrast, FIG. 16 depicts an embodiment of a parking meter 400 having a removable parking meter mechanism 430 with a front housing 434 that is slidably attached to an internal structure 432. In contrast to the parking meter mechanism 130 described above, when placing the parking meter mechanism 430 in the lower housing 102, the back housing 410 is first connected to front housing 434 as depicted. Connecting the back housing 410 to the front housing 434 may provide additional strength to the protective housing of the parking meter 400 since any lateral movement between the front housing 434 and the back housing 410, which is required to secure the back housing 110 in the lower housing 102 in the embodiment described above with reference to FIGS. 1 to 7, is substantially prevented. However, in order to place the parking meter mechanism 430 into the lower housing 102, the front housing 434 and connected back housing 410 must be able to move laterally with respect to a coin slot protrusion 437 forming part of the mechanism cover plate 466 of the internal structure 432. The coin slot protrusion 437 is received in a corresponding opening 163 in the lower housing 102. The coin slot protrusion 437 is sized so that it fits tightly within the corresponding opening 163 in the lower housing 102, and as such lateral movement of the coin slot protrusion 437 is substantially prevented. In order to place the parking meter mechanism 430 in the lower housing 102 and engage the corresponding securing points 104 and the moveable securing point 106 of the lower housing 102, securing points 422 are located on the bottom of the back housing 410. Although securing points 422 could be located on the bottom portion of the front housing 434, or on a combination of the bottoms of the front housing 434 and back housing 410, securing points 422 must be able to move laterally with respect to the corresponding securing points 104 and the moveable securing point 106 of the lower housing 102. By attaching the front housing 434 to internal structure 432 in a manner that allows lateral movement of the front housing 434 relative to the internal structure 432, and in particular to the coin slot protrusion 437, the lateral movement of the securing points 422 is possible, since the back housing 410 is first attached to the front housing 434 that can move laterally.

[0087] Various means of attachment of the front housing 434 to the internal structure 432 are possible. For example, a pin or rod may be attached to the internal structure 432, and the front housing 434 may be slidably supported on the pin or rod, through a journaled connection attached to the front housing 434, to thereby allow lateral movement of the front housing 434 on the pin or rod.

[0088] The above has described, with reference to FIGS. 8-14, a parking meter 200 with a solar panel 216 located in

a solar compartment 214 on a front housing 234 below a display 242 and a contactless payment reader located behind the display 242. FIG. 17 provides an embodiment of a parking meter 500 with the solar panel 516 located on the front housing 534 and an exterior surface of the contactless payment reader 544 located above the display 542 of the removable parking meter mechanism 530. The front housing 534 is elongated to provide sufficient space for the solar panel 516 and the contactless payment reader 544. The solar panel 516 may be located in a solar panel compartment (not shown) that, similar to the solar panel compartment 114, has a substantially intact bottom surface. In order to provide sufficient operation of the contactless payment reader 544, it may be necessary to provide a large opening in the front housing 534 through which the contactless payment reader can operate. A protective cover may cover the large opening in order to secure the components of the parking meter mechanism 530 from vandalism and the environment. A back housing 510 secures the front housing 534 to the lower housing 102.

[0089] Furthermore, although not shown in detail in FIG. 17, the front housing 534 may include a front surface portion 581 that can be hinged to the internal structure (not shown) of the parking meter mechanism 530 in order to allow the front surface portion 581 to hinge forward. The front surface portion 581 may be secured adjacent to the back housing 510 by a locking mechanism (not shown) or other means.

[0090] Although the above has described parking meters as having an antenna for communicating mounted above housing component of a parking meter mechanism, it is possible to mount the antenna within the housing components of the parking meter. FIG. 18 provides an embodiment of a parking meter 600 with an internal antenna 652. The front housing 634 and back housing 610 are sloped upwards to form a peaked top 693 that provides an internal hollow space or cavity 673 sufficient in size to allow an internal antenna 652 to be mounted within the cavity 673. The cavity 673 is situated behind and partially above a display opening 640 in the front housing 634, through which a display (not shown) is visible, and is also situated behind and partially above the solar panel compartment 614 of the back housing 610. In order to improve the transmission and reception characteristics of the internal antenna 652, the solar panel compartment 614 is elongated and provided with a transmission opening 672 along the top to provide a passage for radio signals through the back housing 610 and into the cavity 673. The combination of the display opening 640 in the front housing 634 as well as the transmission opening 672 in the solar panel compartment 614 of the back housing 610 allow for the reception and transmission of radio signals to and from the internal antenna 652.

[0091] Various embodiments of parking meters and removable parking meter mechanisms have been described that provide various features. The different features and components of the various embodiments may be individually incorporated into parking meters or parking meter mechanisms that do not include all of the described features. For example, the advantages described herein of arranging a solar panel on a front side of the parking meter may be realized without mounting the solar panel in a solar panel compartment having a substantially intact bottom surface. Similarly, the advantages of having a contactless payment reader located behind a display may be realized in a parking

meter mechanism having a front housing, or more generally an exterior housing that is not coupled to the parking meter mechanism.

What is claimed is:

1. A single space parking meter comprising:
 - a back housing;
 - a removable single space parking meter mechanism engageable with the back housing, the removable single space parking meter mechanism comprising:
 - an internal structure;
 - a front housing, to be exposed to an external environment, coupled to the internal structure;
 - one or more input controls located on the front housing;
 - a display; and
 - an antenna for a contactless payment reader.
2. The single space parking meter of claim 1, wherein payment information is displayed when parking time is being purchased.
3. The single space parking meter of claim 2, wherein the display presents the payment information.
4. The single space parking meter of claim 2, wherein the payment information comprises payment indications, directions or instructions for payment using the contactless payment reader antenna.
5. The single space parking meter of claim 3, wherein the payment information comprises payment indications, directions or instructions for payment using the contactless payment reader antenna.
6. The single space parking meter of claim 1, wherein the front housing comprises a display opening through which the display is visible.
7. The single space parking meter of claim 1, further comprising additional payment components comprising one or more of:
 - a card slot in the front housing for receiving a payment card; and
 - a coin slot for receiving coins.
8. The single space parking meter of claim 7, wherein the additional payment components are coupled or connected to the internal structure of the parking meter mechanism.
9. The single space parking meter of claim 1, wherein the input controls are adjacent to the display.
10. The single space parking meter of claim 1, wherein the antenna for the contactless payment reader is coupled to a contactless payment reader comprising at least one of:
 - a Near-Field Communications (NFC) reader;
 - a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) reader; and
 - an International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 14443 reader.
11. The single space parking meter of claim 1, wherein the input controls comprise a plurality of buttons.
12. The single space parking meter of claim 11, wherein the input controls comprise:
 - a first button for increasing an amount of time purchased;
 - a second button for decreasing the amount of time purchased;
 - a third button for accepting an action; and
 - a fourth button for cancelling an action.
13. The single space parking meter of claim 1, wherein the input controls comprise at least one type of switch selected from the group consisting of:
 - electromechanical switches;
 - piezoelectric switches; and
 - capacitive touch switches.
14. The single space parking meter of claim 1, wherein the removable single space parking meter mechanism further comprises:
 - a plurality of parking meter mechanism components coupled to the internal structure, the plurality of parking meter mechanism components comprising:
 - a control component for controlling operation of the single space parking meter mechanism; and
 - a power source coupled to at least the control component.
15. The single space parking meter of claim 1, wherein the front housing is rigidly attached to the internal structure of the removable parking meter mechanism.
16. The parking meter of claim 1, wherein the antenna for the contactless payment is connected to a contactless payment reader module providing the contactless payment reader via wires.
17. The parking meter of claim 1, wherein the antenna is arranged on a printed circuit board of a contactless payment reader module providing the contactless payment reader.
18. The single space parking meter of claim 1, wherein the front housing of the parking meter mechanism and the back housing provide a protective housing for components and the internal structure of the parking meter mechanism.
19. The single space parking meter of claim 18, wherein the parking meter mechanism and the back housing are slidably engageable.
20. The single space parking meter of claim 18, further comprising:
 - finger protrusions on one of the parking meter mechanism or the back housing; and
 - corresponding rails or grooves on the other one of the parking meter mechanism or the back housing, the corresponding rails or grooves comprising openings to receive the finger protrusions when the parking meter mechanism slidably engages the back housing, wherein the finger protrusions and the corresponding rails or grooves are shaped to allow the finger protrusions to engage and capture the corresponding rails or grooves when the parking meter mechanism is slid up or down the back housing.
21. The single space parking meter of claim 1, further comprising a locking mechanism to secure the parking meter mechanism to the back housing.
22. The single space parking meter of claim 21, wherein the locking mechanism is actuated by a lock located in the back housing.
23. The single space parking meter of claim 1, further comprising an externally-exposed solar panel mounted on the parking meter.
24. The single space parking meter of claim 23, wherein the solar panel is mounted within a solar panel compartment.
25. The single space parking meter of claim 24, wherein the solar panel compartment is located on the front housing.
26. The single space parking meter of claim 1, wherein the solar panel is electrically connected to one or more components of the removable single space parking meter mechanism.
27. The single space parking meter of claim 1, further comprising an auxiliary display, wherein the auxiliary display displays additional information.
28. The single space parking meter of claim 27, wherein the auxiliary display is mounted to the front housing.

29. The single space parking meter of claim 27, wherein the auxiliary display is mounted to the internal structure.

30. The single space parking meter of claim 29, wherein the auxiliary display is mounted to one or both of: a sub-frame of the internal structure; and, a main control board of the internal structure.

31. The single space parking meter of claim 1, further comprising one or more indication lights.

32. The single space parking meter of claim 31, wherein the one or more indication lights are visible through one or more openings in the front housing.

33. The single space parking meter of claim 32, wherein the indication lights indicate payment information.

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