



CITY OF RAPID CITY

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA 57701-2724

Office of the Mayor

300 Sixth Street

605-394-4110

E-mail: mayorsoffice@rcgov.org

November 23, 2016

Rapid City Common Council
300 6th Street
Rapid City, SD 57701

Re: Parking Downtown

Dear Council Member:

In the past several weeks there have been discussions among City staff regarding parking in the downtown area. As you know, our downtown parking was addressed to some extent in the Downtown Master Plan. I believe at some point we will need to create a task force to redesign our parking plan and management strategy.

There are many factors that will have to be addressed in what will likely be a massive overhaul of our downtown parking plan. Such factors include:

- In the areas where parking is metered, we accept nickels, dimes and quarters only. The fee charged, and the technology to collect the fee, are both outdated and in need of updating. Ultimately, all meters should have a credit card slot, and the few-minute increments of parking time one can buy for a dime is essentially unrealistic.
- Throughout the downtown core, there are hundreds of parking meters and parking places with a variety of allotted parking times. The logic behind these parking time limits were, I believe, largely based on people's preferences with no real planning effort.
- There are several blocks of two hour and three hour metered and non-metered parking zones in the core. This requires employees to patrol the area on foot, mark tires with chalk, then return to issue violations for over parking. Again, this technology and management practice is outdated.
- Rapid City parking regulations have created a substantial revenue source for the City of Rapid City. The overwhelming majority of this revenue is based on fines rather than fees. I find this to be fundamentally wrong to use the enforcement arm of government to collect fines in order to satisfy financial requirements.

As you know, the City Parking Ramp was financed through bonding based on the revenue of parking. The annual bond payments equal approximately \$220,000 and we have several more years to pay on this asset. From my standpoint, this serves as a disincentive in and of itself to change our parking management philosophy. Overall, parking customers in the Rapid City downtown core should be paying a fee for the privilege of parking in the busiest area of town, rather than paying a fine for over parking there. Some balance is needed, and a new philosophy should be put into place.

- I have noticed throughout the years that there has been political discomfort, maybe even fear, but certainly avoidance of the downtown parking issue because of the emotional feedback received. I think it's fair to say that avoiding this issue is a failure of leadership. We owe it to the people to come to a resolution that better serves the community.
- Some cities have contracted with third parties to manage their downtown parking. I am certain there are better methods, technology and administration plans that would be better for Rapid City. Some research and development would be necessary to understand the full pros and cons of doing this.

Page 21 of the Downtown Master Plan provide some background and recommendations for a future updated parking plan:

Downtown Parking Plan 2007

The 2007 Downtown Parking Plan identified current parking issues, planning for future parking needs, and recommendations to solve short and long term parking problems. Following the parking study, two major projects were completed; the Main Street Square parking ramp opened in 1998 and renovations to the Pennington County Building included construction of the employee parking structure. During the Downtown Plan process, many community members brought up recommendations from this Parking Plan that are relevant to downtown. Recommendations that should be further studied to determine how to implement them in Downtown include:

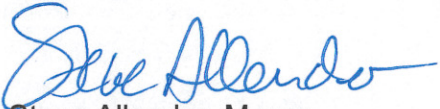
- Need for additional parking close to businesses for their customers
- Eliminating all 2 hour free parking and meter all parking in the downtown area, but allow for the first 15 minutes to be free. This plan would generate an additional \$1.3 million annually, which should go toward building additional parking structures and streetscape improvements/upkeep to downtown's historic look. This will require additional study that would be part of an updated parking management plan.
- There are inconsistent restrictions within Downtown: some metered blocks, some free with time restrictions, some with no restrictions. Currently, there are three rate tiers: leased lot is least expensive (\$20-\$40/mo.), 10 hr. meters (\$0.25/hr.) and 2 hr. meters (\$0.50/hr.)

- A revised parking management system should be implemented.
- Provide additional long term parking, add levels to the existing parking ramp, and an additional parking ramp in a strategic location.

I am providing this information to give you “heads-up” on this important issue. If and when staff is ready to move this work to the front of the line, I will let you know. This is something that will take time, expense, leadership and fortitude to accomplish, but I truly believe the time for it is near.

If you have questions, or would like to visit about this issue, please contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Steve Allender, Mayor
Rapid City, South Dakota