



CITY OF RAPID CITY

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA 57701-2724

Office of the Mayor

300 6th Street

605-394-4110

E-mail: mayorsoffice@rcgov.org

May 1, 2019

Rapid City Common Council
300 Sixth Street
Rapid City, South Dakota 57701

Re: City Ordinance Nos. 6321 and 6324

Dear Council Members:

In advance of the May 2nd public input session and the May 6th second reading of City Ordinance Nos. 6321 and 6324, I wanted to connect with you regarding these items.

History

For 40+ years, our City Council has made the parking rules and procedures. Elected officials were routinely lobbied by various business owners which eventually led to divisiveness and ineffective parking practices; for example: free parking in the downtown core and paid parking on the perimeter has led to employees and residents taking a substantial portion of existing store-front spots. Employees and residents only have to move their car once or twice per day to avoid a parking ticket. Some parking ramp permit-holders park on the street because it's closer to their work, thus, taking up two spots. The downtown businesses have been fighting about this in one form or another for decades. Businesses want more parking closer to their store, but it's being taken up by someone else's employees or residents.

Birth of a New Plan

The City Council agreed more than a year ago to relinquish their hold on the process and allow the hiring of a consultant. The consultant's work reflects hundreds of cities' best practices, trends, most effective strategies, as well as Rapid City's parking inventory, future development plans, growth trends etc. The result: Our current parking plan is inconsistent with capturing current and future optimum downtown development opportunities. After a year and a half of study, public input and the careful and considerate work of professional City employees, we have the proposed parking plan.



EQUAL HOUSING
OPPORTUNITY

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Parking Ramps?

Today, parking ramps cost between \$25 thousand to \$30 thousand per space to construct, and our region will support monthly parking costs of \$30- \$50 per month. We can support hourly rates of \$1 and daily rates of about \$8 to \$10. For government to fund a project such as a parking ramp, knowing the revenue can't pay the debt service would be bad business. In fact, to do so knowing we have yet to efficiently utilize our flat-lot and street parking would be malfeasance. Parking ramps aren't being ruled out, but they are not the best option today and into the short and mid-terms.

Parking ramps require strategically located real estate, and significant funding for construction and maintenance. The National League of Cities urges efficient use of all flat lot and street parking before building ramps. I've personally spoken to dozens of mayors, city managers and council members from across the country who all suggest the parking ramp has the least return on investment of any city infrastructure.

Two Hour Limits

The parking time limits of the outer perimeter are a recommendation of the parking and planning professionals who have created this plan. Who are we to claim the superior knowledge needed to override these recommendations prior to the plan even being implemented? The plan's goals include creating parking turnover, so if two hours is not sufficient, then unlimited parking can be purchased in the downtown core or free parking can be found on the outskirts.

\$25 Fine

The proposed \$25 fine is admittedly a shock to most. Contemplate this for a moment: Suppose speeding tickets only resulted in a \$10 fine. Would people speed more or less? Anyone who's ever received a \$5 speeding ticket in Montana can testify it did not change their driving behavior. The typical speeding ticket today is well over \$100 and that can hurt most of us living on a strict budget. \$100 for speeding is a significant deterrent compared to Montana's \$5 ticket.

The proposed parking plan can only work properly with compliance from the people being regulated. We can ask for compliance on the honor system, but when it comes to government regulations, voluntary compliance is not the strong suit of western South Dakotans. A \$10 fine for over-parking is not a deterrent, it is an inconvenience. \$25 is more of a deterrent and although it seems to some, like too much of an increase from \$10, the low fine is not working. Additionally, the goal of the parking plan is to achieve compliance, not issue tickets. Even though compliance is important, immediate compromise was sought and will apparently be part of the start-up plan. The \$25 fine will be proposed at \$15. A ten dollar difference.

Parking Availability

I believe the parking plan will serve visitors better than the current plan. There is scarce parking, due in part to employees and residents using it all day. We have grossly mismanaged parking for decades, but we never really needed better parking until the last 10 years or so. Now, it's time to manage what we have and plan into the future.

Plan Implementation and Protest

There have been numerous opportunities to interact with the parking planning process over the last year or so. The street parking is City infrastructure, paid for by 100% of Rapid City's residents and visitors. No one owns a greater share than any other person.

It is completely reasonable that people are nervous or apprehensive about the parking change. It is not reasonable that a dozen different business owners can predict the failure of downtown without the level of data and understanding we have come to acquire in the last year and a half. Also unreasonable is the belief that similar parking plans can work elsewhere, but won't work in Rapid City. We have a wonderful downtown area, visited by hundreds of thousands of people each year. But the landscape of downtown is destined to change. More residential building will occur. More businesses selling consumable goods will be needed. Grocery, pharmacy and houseware goods are today, not in appropriate supply for a residential neighborhood.

Change is inevitable and what the City is proposing is a plan that will position us – as a community – in the best possible way for that change. Insisting we keep everything the same or insisting we go backward, will only delay change and will have economic consequences for all.

The goal of the parking plan is to generate turnover in core area parking spaces and to encourage parking and walking or purchasing permits. It is not to pad the pockets of the City on the backs of the merchants; however, additional revenue collected today will help sustain our ability to maintain and build parking in the future.

Parking Advisory Board

In my opinion, the parking plan is full of minutia not appropriate for City Council-level involvement every time a change needs to be made. Small, real-time adjustments will likely need to be made in order for successful implementation and ongoing administration of this plan. Who better to recommend these changes than the people being regulated under this plan? The Parking Advisory Board will be made up of (7) seven members, (4) four of which are business owners in the downtown business improvement district and the other (3) three must be Rapid City residents.

The advisory board will meet as often as needed to administer the plan and will advise and make policy recommendations to City staff and City Council on all aspects of public parking within the City.

The purpose of the board is to provide citizen property owner input into the policy decisions for the City, related to all aspects of public parking, including on-street parking, parking meters, parking garages, parking lots, and parking fees. The board is also responsible for hearing and deciding any administrative appeal from people assessed additional fees for parking in violation of the code.

I am encouraging you to allow this advisory board to do its job in conjunction with City staff, in managing the health and welfare of parking in Rapid City. Letting go of authority is sometimes difficult, but putting that authority in the hands of people who are better equipped to utilize it is a very rewarding and effective experience.

Upon your approval of these two ordinances, I will advertise for members immediately and make selections as soon as practical. I will present my selections to the Council for approval at the next available Council meeting.

Please let me know if you have questions or would like further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Allender". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steve Allender, Mayor
Rapid City, South Dakota