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# Downtown parking plan called 'unfair'

## Some argue that 10-hour meters in front of buildings would hurt businesses

By Scott Aust  
Journal staff

Rapid City Council's legal and finance committee got an earful from people not happy with the proposed downtown parking plan, especially the part calling for 10-hour meters in front of their businesses.

Charles Ray, who owns a building near the Dahl Arts

Center, said he doesn't mind the two-hour meters now in front of the building, but 10 hour meters would definitely have an impact on businesses in those buildings. He said meters should be installed everywhere, including on Main and St. Joseph streets.

"Let those other downtown businesses pay for their clientele like we do. It's totally

unfair to have us subsidize free parking," Ray said.

Unveiled in late April, the plan calls for two-, four- and 10-hour metered parking areas surrounding a core of two-hour free parking along Main and St. Joseph streets from Fourth to Ninth streets. Public comments during an open house in June prompted the city to reduce some 10-hour and four-hour

metered areas to two-hour meters.

Dean Faust, an attorney at Moore & Kandaras on Quincy Street, said his firm represents many individuals who have suffered injuries and can't walk very far. The firm's five parking spots of non-metered two-hour parking is being proposed to change to 10-hour meters, something Faust believes will

mean that individuals will park there all day.

"I feel this makes blanket changes without taking into account individual needs," Faust said.

But a few audience members thought the plan should be given a chance.

Walter Albasi, who owns a couple of buildings downtown, said the plan may need some

slight tweaking, but overall, he said, the parking plan is important for efforts to revitalize downtown.

"Any of these companies — whether they're banks or psychiatrists offices, title companies — if they have issues where employees park, then they need to go out and provide

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# PARKING: Prepaid parking cards will be offered.

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parking," he said. "The 50 cents a day may be a lot to the employee, but the bank, maybe they can spring for a little parking or come to the table with some solutions."

One of the goals of the plan is to keep parking spaces open for customers in front of downtown businesses by moving employees out toward the perimeters of downtown to park.

City officials say the public and merchants have also complained about two-hour parking because it doesn't allow enough time to shop, eat or go to the movies.

Another goal is to provide some consistency in parking downtown. Currently, there exists a hodgepodge of metered and non-metered parking that some consider confusing. Under the proposed plan, most of the east-west streets will have two-hour meters, and the north-south streets in the central business district would have four-hour meters. Ten-hour parking would be limited to areas on the perimeter.

Non-metered, two-hour parking would still be in effect on Main and St. Joseph streets from Fourth to Ninth streets, and on Fifth, Sixth and Seventh streets between Main and St. Joe. However, fines for over-

parking on those streets would change from \$5 per violation to a graduated system of increasing fines that could cost up to \$20 per ticket if four tickets are received in a six-month period.

Parking meters would charge 50 cents per hour in the two-hour zones; 25 cents per hour in the four-hour zones; and 25 cents for two hours in the 10-hour zones on the periphery of downtown.

Each meter would have a button allowing 15 minutes of free parking for those who need to make a quick stop to drop something off or pick something up.

People will also be able to buy prepaid parking cards containing a certain number of minutes to use in the parking meters to buy parking time and to put unused time back on the card if they don't use all their minutes.

Mayor Alan Hanks said the plan should help keep parking spaces open for customers in the central core while creating additional revenue for the city to use for future parking improvements, including the possibility of additional multi-level ramps.

The committee forwarded the plan to Monday's city council meeting with a recommendation to hold an additional public meeting and to send postcards to all affected building owners notifying them of the meeting and inviting them to provide input on the plan.

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