

New parking plan proposes more meters, graduated fines



Ryan Soderlin/Journal staff

Deb Holloway of Rapid City feeds the parking meter in front of the Rapid City Public Library on Quincy Street. The parking meters in front of the library are going from two-hour meters to 10-hour meters. Holloway said that she has a hard time finding

parking in front of the library. She said when the meters change from two hours to 10 hours, finding a parking spot will become more difficult, because the spots will not be freed up as often.

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Changes aim to ease struggle for parking spots

■ Employees who work in the downtown area would be moved out of the prime shopping area.

By Scott Aust
Journal staff

Parking in downtown Rapid City may get more complicated in the future.

A proposal unveiled Tuesday retains two-hour free parking in a core area bordered by Main and St. Joseph streets from Fourth to Ninth streets, but parking meters would be installed through the rest of downtown. (See map on Page A2.)

The goal is to free up parking spaces for customers in front of downtown businesses by moving people who work downtown out toward the perimeters of downtown to park.

Rapid Citian Deb Holloway said downtown parking already is challenging, and it may get even more difficult if people are allowed to park longer in certain areas.

"I know every time I come to the library, I have the darnedest time," Holloway said.

But it is equally difficult to find a place to park along Main and St. Joseph streets, she said; she sometimes must drive around the block three or four times. So the proposed plan may improve things in the core area, but Holloway believes it will make things worse at the library.

Connie Houchell of Rapid City said she doesn't have a problem parking at the library, but parking is one reason she avoids going downtown.

The parking proposal was developed over several months by a subcommittee of the downtown revitalization committee. Members of the committee were the first to hear the new plan Tuesday.

City officials say the public and merchants have complained about two-hour parking because it doesn't allow enough time to shop, eat or go to movies. To address the concern, the plan envisions four-hour meters within a block of the core.

Two-hour metered parking is proposed for streets near the YMCA and the first block of Seventh Street south of Omaha Street at a cost of 50 cents per hour.

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What's next?

The parking plan is not finalized.

The revitalization committee still must approve the plan and submit it to the city council. A date for the committee's next meeting has not been set.

Rapid City Mayor Alan Hanks said there will be plenty of opportunities to get public suggestions, answer questions and make revisions to the plan, if necessary. Changing the parking system will require a change in ordinance, and ordinance changes require the city council to take two separate votes before it becomes final.

Inside

A map shows how streets would be metered if proposed changes take effect.

See Page A2



Courtesy of the City of Rapid City

The map above shows how streets would be metered if proposed changes to downtown area parking are put into effect.

Parking: Meters lengthen parking times

From Page A1

Four-hour parking meters will cost 25 cents per hour; and 10-hour meters, located on the periphery of downtown, will charge 25 cents for two hours, or 12.5 cents an hour.

Prepaid parking cards will allow people to buy a certain number of minutes to use each time they park. People would insert the card in a meter and pay for a certain number of hours.

The plan also addresses teacher parking at Dakota Middle School and in residences on streets with 10-hour parking. Teachers could continue to park along the street near the school using a permit or sticker in their vehicle. Residents could apply to the city for a residential permit as long as the city can verify that no off-street parking is available for the resident. The residential permit

could only be used to park in front of the residence in 10-hour metered parking zones.

Parking tickets also could change in the two-hour, non-metered areas. Instead of \$5 for each ticket, parking violators would pay a graduated fine for each ticket received.

"That would discourage employees who get a \$5 ticket and say, 'OK, I'll pay five bucks.' When you start paying \$15 or \$20 for a ticket, we feel like that's enough disincentive for people to move to the outlying areas," Monica Heller of the community planning division said.

Parking fines would not change in metered parking areas.

Mayor Alan Hanks said the 10-hour meters are close enough to the core downtown area for employees to walk to work, and for 12.5 cents per hour, employees can park

for \$1 a day.

"If you work 20 days a month, that's cheaper than our leased parking," Hanks said. Each meter will have a push button that allows 15 minutes of free parking, Hanks said. "And no matter where you're at that's metered, you'll have the first 15 minutes free courtesy of the city. It's basically a nice way to allow people to run in, do their business and come back out."

Implementing the plan and installing all the new meters will cost about \$600,000. Hanks said the city could recover that cost in the first year and then use the additional revenue to improve parking downtown.

Hanks said the revenue could be used as a funding source to allow the city to bond for construction of additional parking ramps in the downtown area. Hanks said

the city is adding a third level to its existing parking ramp, but he emphasized that project is being funded independently of the proposed new parking plan.

Alderman Ron Kroeger, liaison to the Rapid City Public Library board, said he worried that allowing people to park all day in front of the library would negatively affect library patrons.

Bob and JoDee Wilfong of Melbourne, Fla., come to Rapid City often to visit their daughter. They worried about making parking more difficult for people who want to use the library.

"Then all these places would be taken, and they wouldn't be library customers," JoDee Wilfong said. "I don't like it when I can't get to the library."

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