

Public voices concerns over parking downtown

CITY COUNCIL: Most of the concerns are about the effect of allowing parking longer than two hours.

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Proposed change

No decisions were made about downtown parking during a Monday special Rapid City Council meeting about a parking plan that envisions installing 10-hour, four-hour and two-hour parking meters throughout downtown.

Unveiled in late April, the plan calls for metered parking areas surrounding a core of two-hour free parking along Main and St. Joseph streets from Fourth to Ninth streets.

More than 30 speakers Monday expressed similar concerns that have been expressed over the past several months. Most of the concerns are about the effect of allowing parking longer than two hours will have on businesses and residences.

Others, such as the West Boulevard Neighborhood

See **PARKING**, Page A2

PARKING: City staff has proposed several changes to proposal.

From Page A1

09.30.08

Journal

Association, are concerned that people trying to avoid feeding meters will take up spaces in their neighborhood.

In an attempt to resolve some of the issues, city staff proposed several changes to the proposal, including:

■ Removing meters proposed on Quincy and Columbus Streets between Ninth and West Boulevard. Residents of West Boulevard neighborhood have concerns about allowing meters in

that area.

■ Changing meters proposed for Kansas City Street in front of the YMCA to four-hour meters instead of two-hour meters.

■ Changing to two-hour meters on a block of Mount Rushmore Road south of Quincy that had been proposed for 10-hour meters.

■ Installing four-hour meters instead of two-hour meters on St. Joseph in the block east of Fifth Street.

■ Adding two-hour meters on Sixth Street near the City/School Administration Center.

■ Changing two blocks of Main east of Fourth Street to four-hour meters instead of 10-hour meters.

The council took no action

on the recommendations but will talk about it all again at the Oct. 15 legal and finance committee meeting.

West Boulevard residents urged the council to remove meters from Columbus and Quincy, and from the west side of Ninth Street to protect the historic district from commercial encroachment.

Business owners on Sixth Street worried any meters would steer needed traffic away from them.

Kelly Tumas, who owns a dance wear shop in the 600 block of Sixth Street that caters to children, doubts a mother would enjoy fishing out change for a meter with kids in tow.

Roger Frye said his nearby paint shop gets 100 cus-

tomers a day, a volume he believes would drop if four-hour meters are installed.

"We're not going to get our customer turnover like we do now," Frye said.

Dan Senfner, who has worked downtown for 32 years, said more parking is needed downtown, especially considering efforts underway to revitalize downtown. However, he acknowledged he doesn't have an easy solution to the problem.

"Downtown is viable energy for Rapid City. I'm putting my heart and soul into it. I think everyone needs it," Senfner said. "What we need is unity because everyone enjoys what we have here and everyone wants to see growth."

Alderman Ron Weifenbach said revenue from meters would allow city to build more ramps. However, Weifenbach thinks to be more consistent, the city should put in two-hour meters throughout downtown and then bond for a new ramp as soon as possible.

There will be several additional chances for public comment on the plan as the council discusses a proposed ordinance change.

Ordinances require two separate votes so the public will have at least four more chances, twice at the legal and finance committee and twice in front of the council, to comment on the plan.

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