

Downtown parking proposal could be delayed

By Scott Aust

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Implementation of Rapid City's downtown parking plan may be put on hold to allow establishing a task force to study public-inspired changes and discuss setting a specific goal to build new parking.

During Wednesday's legal and finance committee, Rapid City Council members voted to ask the mayor to form the task force.

The group would review the parking plan, which envisions installing 10-hour, four-hour and two-hour parking meters throughout downtown surrounding a core of two-hour free parking along Main and St. Joseph streets from Fourth to Ninth streets.

In hopes of resolving public concerns, city staff has proposed several changes to the parking plan. The changes include dropping proposed meters on Quincy and Columbus streets between Ninth and West Boulevard;

changing meters proposed for Kansas City Street in front of the YMCA to four-hour units instead of two-hour meters; and changing two blocks of Main east of Fourth Street to four-hour meters instead of 10-hour meters.

Alderman Malcom Chapman said the city's goal to use meter revenues to build additional downtown parking has been too generic so far.

He believes the task force should talk about how much additional revenue will be generated from new meters and should also come up with a specific goal for a new parking structure.

"The two go hand in hand," he said.

Another factor the committee should weigh is the availability of \$2.8 million in 2012 fund money recently freed due to the shelving of the Rushmont project earlier this week, Chapman said.

Having that money provides an opportunity to merge the desire for additional parking

with the downtown parking plan and create a definite goal for the community, according to Chapman.

Many downtown residents and business owners have opposed the parking plan. Most of the concerns have been about allowing parking longer than two hours. Others, like the West Boulevard Neighborhood Association, are concerned that people trying to avoid feeding meters will take up spaces in their neighborhood.

Citizens who spoke Wednesday echoed those concerns, especially about the proposed 10-hour parking meters near their businesses.

Dean Faust, an associate attorney with Moore and Kandaras, 924 Quincy St., said the firm wants to maintain the current five spaces of two-hour, non-metered parking because many of its clients are injured and unable to walk great distances.

If the proposed 10-hour meters are installed, the firm

fears those five spaces will be filled all day by people who work downtown leaving no spaces for clients.

Greg Wick, president of Pennington Title Co., 725 Kansas City St., said he feels strongly about maintaining two-hour metered parking on Kansas City Street.

Wick noted when the business remodeled a couple of years ago, it created an off-street parking lot for employees and customers.

Charles Ray, 703 Quincy, said he wants to keep the current two-hour meters on Seventh Street near his property and not have 10-hour meters installed.

"We really need that two-hour parking," he said. "If you put in 10-hour meters, they're going to be taken up all day long. Our meters work great."

The committee's recommendation won't become final until Monday's full city council meeting.

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