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City makes significant changes to parking proposal

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS OWNERS MAKE VOICES HEARD ON PROPOSAL

BY LANA BRADSTREAM
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A significant number of changes have been made to the proposed Rapid City downtown parking plan. City officials listened to concerns about the plan during a June 24 public meeting with downtown business owners.

Rapid City Community Planning Coordinator Monica Heller said she feels the new plan addresses a majority of the concerns downtown business owners have.

"It does a good job of balancing the intent of the plan which is to provide long-term parking and parking for businesses," Heller said. "Does it meet everyone's concerns? No."

The significant changes made to the plan, said Heller, include keeping two-hour parking meters on streets that run east to west, such as Kansas City Street, and four-hour parking on streets that run north to south, such as Seventh Street.

"We're trying to provide consistency. The main concern we heard was owners would like to maintain two-hour parking in front of their businesses," Heller said.

The new plan calls for two-hour non-metered parking on Main Street from Fourth Street to Ninth Street and on St. Joseph Street from Ninth to Fifth Street.

The streets between Main and St. Joseph will also have two-hour non-metered parking.

Two-hour parking meters will be placed on Kansas City and Quincy streets from Fourth to Ninth streets and also on Columbus Street from Eighth Street to Ninth. Four-hour metered parking will be on Kansas City from Second Street to Fourth and on Sixth Street and Seventh Street. Ten-hour metered parking will be placed on the surrounding streets.

Heller said she has also heard concerns about metered parking surrounding the YMCA on Kansas City.

"They're afraid of the additional cost to the YMCA members," Heller said. "At this point, we still showing metered parking there."

The new changes will not affect the cost of the plan if the Rapid City Council chooses to implement it. The latest cost for the plan is \$700,000 and Heller said the plan would pay for itself within a year via parking meters.

Greg Wick, 52, president of Pennington Title on Kansas City, said he likes the revised parking proposal and he

was very impressed with the June 24 meeting between Mayor Alan Hanks, Heller and the downtown business owners.

"With the previous proposal, I had comments that I felt the parking could better serve our clientele," Wick said. "This administration has been open to receiving public comment and I really like the revision. It is much closer to satisfying the identified needs and keeping business downtown."

Wick added he feels the revision does an especially good job with serving the parking needs of Kansas City Street businesses.

"Parking is certainly an issue that has been discussed for a long time and it will continue to be discussed as long as Rapid City parking needs grow," Wick said. "As businesses change, other things change and this will certainly be

an ongoing issue."

Kevin Eggebraaten, 41, vice president of Casey Peterson Associates on Kansas City Street, said that business already has meters in front of it. He added while he is not fully educated on the downtown parking proposal, he feels a downtown parking structure is probably the best

way to serve different needs of different businesses.

"Parking needs are different for us than for the people at the Alex Johnson," Eggebraaten said.

The two-hour meters will cost 50 cents per hour; four-hour and 10-hour meters, 25 cents per hour. The electronic meters will also take prepaid parking cards. First-time parking violators would receive a warning and possibly a coupon for a free coffee or bagel or a 10% discount at one of the downtown businesses. After the first offense, a \$5 fee would be implemented which would increase to \$10 for the third violation.

The proposal will go to the Legal and Finance Committee on July 16 and then to the Rapid City Council on July 21. Heller said the plan is still to start installing the parking meters this summer and for the plan to be in effect this winter.

The city is still looking to swap land off Catron Boulevard and Highway 16B for a lot across Fifth Street from the C/SAC Building with the South Dakota Department of Transportation. The city wants to turn the land into a parking lot which would provide 50 extra parking spaces. Heller said they want to begin construction of the parking lot immediately after the acquisition and have it completed before the construction of the third level of the downtown parking ramp begins either late this summer or early fall.

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— MONICA HELLER