

Council keeps door open on greenway lot

■ After rejecting a parking lot along Rapid Creek, aldermen decide to give the issue another hearing.

By Hugh O'Gara
Journal Staff Writer

After unanimously rejecting a proposal to build a parking lot along Rapid Creek, the Rapid City Common Council decided it would listen to the idea a second time.

At its Monday meeting, the council was prepared to formally approve a policy to not even hear proposals for private development in the city-owned greenway tracts that have lined Rapid Creek since a disastrous flood in 1972.

But on a suggestion by Alderman Buzz Knapp, the council did a turnaround and returned the policy to committee to hear more from those who wish to use park land for a parking lot.

Kahler Realtors, with offices at Omaha Street and Mountainview Road, wants to build a 2,200-square-foot addition to its building and add more parking on city-owned greenway land.

Earlier company officials argued the addition and parking lot would increase the city's property tax base and create jobs. Besides, David Kahler told the city's Legal/Finance Committee, the public already uses the company parking lot because it is

close to the bike path.

Aldermen Alvin Albrecht and Delores Coffing opposed returning the policy to committee.

Albrecht said the city accepted millions of dollars from the federal government to develop the greenway after the 1972 flood that killed hundreds and the city should stick with its word.

Coffing said by allowing one private development in the greenway, "the precedent would be set" for other requests.

"Why can't we be up-front with the public that in our lifetime, we will not develop in the greenway," Coffing said.

But other council members decided it never hurts to listen.

The council has not allowed private development in the greenway since it began purchasing it after the 1972 flood, so it won't hurt to wait until the June 2 hearing, Alderman Tom Johnson said.

Alderman Karen Bulman said it wouldn't hurt to listen, but said, "I don't know if the council will change its mind."

In other business, the council was told about 300 to 400 downtown businesses will receive letters that taxes collected under the 1990 Business Improvement District (BID) are being returned.

Finance Officer Richard Wahlstrom said about \$62,000 in taxes was collected during the six-month lifetime of BID before it was repealed and \$55,000 of it was spent on downtown promotions.

The letters explain how the remaining \$7,000 will be returned.

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