

City wants to end game of parking tag

You can run, but you can't park *8-1*

By Paulette Tobin
Journal Staff Writer

Rapid City will consider cracking down on people who circumvent the two-hour downtown parking limit with such tricks as moving their cars a few parking spaces every two hours.

Finding the people who routinely move their cars to avoid getting tickets won't be a problem for parking enforcement officers who patrol downtown every day, Community Development Director Bonnie Hughes told the Rapid City Common Council's Legal and Finance Committee Wednesday.

"The enforcement people know exactly who these people are, and they know where they are moving their cars," Hughes said.

So just who are these parking scofflaws? Mostly they are downtown business operators and their employees.

Hughes and other members of a downtown parking committee recommended these ordinance changes to crack down on violators:

■ The city should ticket car owners who move their cars from one side of the street to the other every two hours to avoid getting a parking ticket. Once a parked car is moved, it should not be parked again within the same

block for at least 30 minutes.

■ The city should lower from 10 to five the number of outstanding parking tickets an individual could receive before his or her vehicle was mechanically "booted" to prevent it from being driven.

■ The city should stop sending vehicle owners a registered letter warning them their vehicle is about to be booted. Instead, the offending vehicles should be tagged with a written warning and owners given five days to pay up.

■ The boot should not be removed from a vehicle until all outstanding parking tickets are paid in full. Because violators may have \$200 to \$300 in outstanding tickets when their cars are booted, the city sometimes allows them to pay the fines in installments. Some people take advantage of the city's generosity by paying only a couple of installments on what they owe. Others whose cars are about to be booted come in and pay the two oldest outstanding parking tickets to keep their cars from getting booted.

■ Enforcement hours for metered parking should be changed from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. to 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., since most downtown businesses close by 5 p.m.

■ The city should install new signs downtown directing people to parking lots and explaining what is leased parking and what is short-term parking.

■ The city should provide free parking in the city-owned parking lot near the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association building for oversized recreational vehicles.

The changes will first be considered at the common council meeting Monday night.