



CITY OF RAPID CITY

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA 57701-2724

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July 3, 2017

Rapid City Common Council
300 Sixth Street
Rapid City, SD 57701

Re: Item 29 on July 3, 2017 City Council Agenda: Downtown Parking Study & Strategic Plan

Dear Council Members:

Approving the consultant/parking study tonight is an important step for moving Rapid City forward in two different areas: development at 6th and St. Joseph Street and our public parking policy and procedures generally.

I hope we all agree we should not repeat the multi-year-long failed process used during the Presidents Plaza development. It is important for us to understand the current and future parking demand in downtown Rapid City. This knowledge will become extremely helpful when we seek proposals from developers for the city lot at 6th and St. Joseph Street. We are very quick to assume we understand the parking demand, but it's time we understood this from an objective perspective.

The parking study is an important first step for the development at the former Presidents Plaza location. It will help us when it comes time to select the appropriate development for this specific lot. An evidence-based professional rationale for current and future parking demand is preferred over the use of our own instincts or gut feelings. Once the parking study is complete in approximately (6) six months, we will then send out a request for qualifications for developers for the lot at 6th and St. Joseph Street. The process for choosing appropriate development there will be underway at that time. The parking study information will not only be extremely useful for our city administration, it will also be useful for potential developers and will speed up the process of development at this location.



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The study is also important to determine downtown parking demand generally, especially in light of the Downtown Master Plan. As you know, our expanding downtown area holds many opportunities both for the City and for private enterprise. Our Downtown Plan calls for "housing everywhere" which will bring with it a parking need.

The study will be essential to modernize our public parking procedures and policies in the downtown area. Downtown parking in Rapid City is only made more difficult and inefficient by our antiquated practices and policy. The most glaring deficiencies in policy and procedure are that premium parking is free, but time-limited; our parking fees are extremely low at 0.25 cents per hour; and the parking areas at the outskirts of the downtown area are metered. The result of all this is parking dysfunction as well as our Parking Lot and Area Fund being funded primarily from fines resulting from parking violations rather than fees for premium parking. This is a backwards practice, and it is ethically questionable in my opinion.

Parking regulations are not known as, nor are they designed to be people pleasers. Regulation is necessary to ensure adequate turnover in our limited downtown parking spaces. Historically, when our city administration has made changes to the downtown parking scheme, it has come from political motivation, which has invariably made the situation worse. We need help in developing policy and procedure for downtown parking. The consultant and the parking study will provide this.

Funding for the parking study will come from the Parking Lot and Area Fund: the enterprise fund that receives revenues from parking.

I understand that "consultant" is being made into a four letter word lately, but I truly believe this is one case where not using a consultant will be more costly than using one. To forgo this study will cause us to re-create the cultural parking problem we have created and lived with for decades.

If you have any questions about this, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Steve Allender, Mayor
Rapid City, South Dakota