

# Merchants await parking lot decision

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Downtown merchants are once again hoping for dry weather while awaiting a decision from the Rapid City Common Council concerning the new St. Joseph Street parking lot.

On Monday the council will consider a recommendation from its Legal and Finance Committee to spread gravel over the east half of the lot for temporary parking.

Last week the city spread gravel on the west half of the lot, which is bet-

ween Fifth and Sixth Streets. That action came after earlier complaints from downtown merchants.

The temporary gravel was to provide parking for Christmas shoppers.

The city had hoped to finish the lot this fall, but delays in land acquisition, followed by bad weather, stopped construction crews.

On Wednesday at a meeting of the council's Legal and Finance Committee, several downtown merchants complained that people who normally parked on Kansas City Street had

moved into the half-finished lot, leaving little room for downtown employees or shoppers.

Jerry Willits, owner of Jerry's House of Pizza on St. Joseph Street, urged the council to spread gravel on the other half of the lot.

City Public Works Director Leonard Swanson said the other half of the lot had been too muddy to pour gravel on last week. The only way to prepare the lot would have been to dig out the mud first. That solution would have cost the city an extra \$8,000.

The city spent about \$7,000 to spread gravel on the west end of the lot.

Alderman Jerry Shoener said the lot should be finished, even at the extra cost.

The Legal and Finance Committee directed City Finance Officer Kent Brugger to find a way to pay for the extra gravel and report to the full council Monday.

Brugger said Friday the money would probably come from a parking lot and area fund.