

Council postpones night parking decision

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The Rapid City Common Council has postponed a decision to continue banning nighttime public parking at a downtown lot, after complaints from downtown bar owners.

The city owns the parking lot at Main Street and Mount Rushmore Road and leases spaces to downtown workers for \$15 per month. The leases cover 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

But Rod Bidlack, owner of the Boot Hill Saloon, told the council Monday night the city should open the lot at night, when it is almost empty.

In addition to the Boot Hill, three other bars are near the lot: Filly's in the Hilton Inn, Murphy's Bar and the Crystal Bar & Lounge. Representatives from all four bars said the lots should be open.

Bidlac said on-street parking is inadequate. He also said downtown businesses pay a special property tax to pay for downtown parking.

Mayor Art LaCroix said the purpose of the special assessment is to build parking that will, in turn, make more on-street parking available. The assessment is not to provide off-street parking for every business. "We couldn't do that," LaCroix said.

Opening the lots at night poses several problems for the city, LaCroix said. First, those who lease parking spaces did so thinking the spaces would be available 24 hours a day. A reduction in lease payments might be necessary. Also, LaCroix said towing cars from the lot in the morning could be both expensive and a public relations problem. Finally, if Main Street lot leases were changed, leases on other city lots would have to be altered.

Public Works Director Leonard Swanson suggested the city lease the entire lot to the four bar owners, who could then sublease spaces to downtown workers during the day. Bar owners agreed to meet with city officials to discuss that option.

The council sent the issue back to the Legal and Finance Committee, which will consider it Feb. 26.

In other action the council:

Accepted a traffic study done by BRW of Minneapolis. The study recommends, among other things, making Quincy and Kansas City streets one-way. The West Boulevard Association opposes several recommendations in the study. City approval Monday was only so the city can pay BRW \$25,000 for the study, 80 percent of which was paid for through federal funds.

Authorized payment of \$70,000 for Laughlin Cleaners — \$40,000 for the land and \$30,000 for the building and equipment. The property, at 519 St. Joseph St., has been condemned to make way for a parking lot on the south side of St. Joseph Street. The lot will stretch from Sixth to Fifth Street. The owners of Laughlin Cleaners say the property is worth more and the dispute will be heard in 7th Circuit Court Feb. 12.

Set aside one third of the new St. Joseph Street lot for four-hour metered parking. The rest of the lot will be leased parking.

Appointed Keith Tilkens and Bob Schurger to the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center board. Tilkens owns KKLS Radio in Rapid City. Schurger is executive vice president and general manager of Pete Lien & Sons Inc. They replace John Phelps and Dr. Art Lampert, whose terms expired.