

# City resisting bar owners' efforts to get parking lot opened at night

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Some downtown Rapid City bar owners say a city-owned parking lot should be opened at night. But city Public Works Director Leonard Swanson says a study shows there is enough on-street parking downtown at night.

Swanson told a city committee Tuesday his staff had surveyed parking downtown for five nights in February and on a Friday and Saturday night during March. Swanson said the study shows, "There are very few times there wasn't a space available within a half block of where anybody wanted to go."

The city owns the lot at Mount Rushmore Road and Main Street and leases parking to downtown workers for \$20 per month. The leases run 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In February bar owners told the council that the lot, which is nearly empty at night, should be opened for their customers.

Mayor Art LaCroix said current leases would have to be changed to do that, and the city would earn less

revenue. He also said towing cars still parked there in the morning would be both expensive and a public relations problem.

Swanson even suggested the bar owners buy the lot from the city and lease it back to workers in the daytime. But a meeting between bar owners and the city never took place.

Now Swanson says the parking is adequate. His staff checked the number of parking spaces available every hour, from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m., on Friday and Saturday nights, March 14 and 15. In February inventories were taken hourly from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., Thursday through Monday (Feb. 6 through 10).

According to the study, while parking is not always available in front of the bars, there is almost always parking within two blocks and usually parking is available closer.

Rod Bidlack, owner of the Boot Hill Saloon, had called for opening the lot. He said Wednesday he would not comment on the study until he had seen it, although he said the results of any study would probably be different during warmer weather.

But Bidlack said if the city does not open the Mount Rushmore Road lot at night, he would still like to join with others to buy the lot and operate it.