

Council reconsiders parking ramp site

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Rapid City's proposed downtown parking ramp may again be looking for a place to roost.

The reason is money. The privately-owned land the city wanted to buy for the ramp on St. Joseph Street, between Fifth and Sixth streets, is likely to cost more than the city's appraiser said it would.

So, after months of planning to build the ramp on the St. Joseph Street site, the Common Council decided Monday evening to look again at other sites that were considered last spring.

The council's parking ramp committee will meet at 2 p.m. Oct. 24 to discuss the sites.

The budget for the ramp is \$1 million. The total project cost for a 240-space ramp, from the corner of Sixth and St. Joseph east to the Schneider Music Co. building, was estimated at \$1.28 million.

A \$150,000 contribution offered by downtown businesses would have helped bring the ramp cost closer to the budget, but that offer has been withdrawn, LaCroix said.

Downtown Association member Mike Konvalin said he didn't want to comment on the donation or its withdrawal before he had met with other association members. Konvalin is the past president of the association. Current president Anna Marie Thatcher could not be reached.

If the city has to pay more than what its appraiser set for the land and businesses at that site, that could put the cost even further out of reach, LaCroix said.

"I think you have got to consider another site for the parking ramp," LaCroix told the council. The only site that fit the budget was the city-owned parking lot at Sixth and Main streets.

According to cost estimates prepared in April by Dunham Associates, the

engineering firm hired to design the parking ramp, a 235-space ramp on the city-owned land would cost about \$983,000.

Two property owners at the St. Joseph Street site rejected the city's offers, and one submitted a counteroffer asking for more money, said Assistant City Attorney Mitch Johnson.

Pennco Investment Corp., which owns the building housing Avco Financial Services, turned down the city's offer of \$77,300.

The price was "very inadequate," Ray McMahan, a spokesman for Pennco, said Tuesday morning. The price was based on only one appraisal, and he felt other appraisers would set higher values.

McMahan said he wasn't at liberty to say what price Pennco would accept for its property.

Wallace K. Olson, owner of Laughlin Cleaners and Tailors at 519 St. Joseph St., on Tuesday said the city's offer of

\$29,500 for his business and land "wasn't even realistic."

The situation has been handled "very poorly," Olson said. No one from city government has talked to them about what it would take to find a new building and move their equipment there, he said.

"I'm not against developing a city, and if . . . it seems we're in the way, I see no reason why we shouldn't consider moving," Olson said. "At the same time, I don't see why we wouldn't be reimbursed for what it would cost to move.

"They didn't offer me enough to buy one of my machines over here," he added.

Duhamel Enterprises owns land along St. Joseph Street also, between Laughlin Cleaners and the Schneider Music building. The city offered \$131,000 for the land and buildings, and Duhamel made a counteroffer asking for \$35,000 more to pay for relocation of KOTA's satellite dishes, Johnson said.