

Council to consider use of parking boots

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Staff Writer

People who don't pay their parking tickets could have their cars immobilized by a mechanical "boot," if the Rapid City Common Council adopts a measure recommended by Mitch Johnson, deputy city attorney.

The council's legal and finance committee approved the measure Wednesday. The full council will consider it Monday.

Under the new ordinance, police would have the authority to attach a boot to the front wheel of cars owned by people who have 10 or more unpaid parking tickets.

The device prevents the front wheel from turning. Police would not release the car until back tickets were paid.

Some council members and Mayor Art LaCroix expressed reservations about the proposed ordinance. For example, they said, if a car is sold and the title isn't transferred immediately, police might boot the car and penalize the new owner.

The ordinance is modeled after a Chicago regulation that has been upheld in a federal appeals court, Johnson said Wednesday.

That court found that the public benefit outweighed the possible inconvenience.

If adopted, the ordinance could save city taxpayers about \$30,000 a year, Johnson estimates.

The city loses \$80,000 a year on parking violations. About \$40,000 comes in costs associated with issuing warrants.

Under the new system, Johnson said the city would issue far fewer warrants, relying instead on the boot. He said the boots would cost about \$350 apiece and the city would probably buy five.

Also at Wednesday's meeting, four candidates for a Ward 3 Common Council seat made presentations to the committee.

Chuck Thielen, a professor at South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, and Carole Hillard, who serves on the state Board of Charities and Corrections had announced their interest in the job last week.

Attorney Frank Bettman and Joyce Jacobson added their names to the list Wednesday.

Darwin Jensen, a member of the City Planning Commission, told the public works committee Tuesday he was interested in the job.

Bettman, a former Pennington Coun-

ty deputy states attorney, has a private law practice here.

Jacobsen, who lives in Chapel Valley, serves on several neighborhood boards and commissions.

The committee also approved a new bicycle ordinance that would, among other things, establish a bicyclist's right to use public roads and require dealers to license bicycles.

Also, two vendors requested permits to sell food and beverages from pushcarts in city parks.

City Park Superintendent Lon Van Deusen opposed the permits. "People come to the parks for peace and quiet," he said. "We could have a traffic jam, and our parking lots and roadways are already congested."

The committee sent the requests to the full council with no recommendation.