

City employees to do survey on parking ramp

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In two weeks, city employees will have completed a study pinpointing the area where a downtown parking ramp is most needed.

Two weeks ago, the Rapid City Common Council's Parking Ramp Steering Committee asked the Downtown Association to survey downtown businesses to find out how many people would be willing to pay \$25 to \$30 per month to park in the proposed ramp.

But the survey was never done, so committee members decided Wednesday night to have the city staff do it.

Members of the association who attended Wednesday's meeting said they had not had enough information to do the study. They also said they didn't think many people would be willing to pay a monthly fee more than \$20 to park in the ramp.

But committee chairman Guy Edwards said he didn't believe in building a parking ramp without commitments for most of its space. If people wouldn't be willing to park in it, he said, he would recommend the ramp not be built at all.

The city will not be charging fees to pay for building the ramp but for maintaining it, Edwards said.

"I agree," said councilman Gale Holbrook. "If we can't fill 200 slots, we shouldn't be building one."

Holbrook said he thought committee members were wasting their time until a survey could tell them where a ramp would get the most use. They are planning a \$1 million project, he said, and should be willing to put more planning time into it.

"It was my understanding that when we came to this meeting, we would have a survey telling us where the need is," he said. "If we've got to pay a city employee to go down and make the damned survey, let's do it."

The committee will meet at 7 p.m. March 14 to review the results of the staff survey and plans to choose a site for the ramp at that time.

The City Hall Steering Committee will meet at 1:30 p.m. Friday at city hall to discuss possible locations for a new city hall. All the steering committee meetings are open to the public.

The city staff and mayor are in the process of negotiating with the first-choice architects and engineers for the ramp and city hall projects.