

Sixth and Omaha picked as new city hall site

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Rapid City's new city hall will be at Sixth and Omaha streets downtown.

And the proposed downtown parking ramp probably will be at Sixth and St. Joseph streets.

The Rapid City Common Council voted unanimously Wednesday to begin negotiations for the block of land between the railroad tracks and Omaha Street between Fifth and Sixth streets and for property between Fifth and Sixth streets along the south side of St. Joseph street.

Now, the Rapid City School District will have to decide if it wants to build a school administration building in con-

junction with the new city hall. The Sixth and Omaha site is big enough for a combined city-school building.

Alderman Keith Carlyle, an earlier supporter of a site east of the Pennington County Courthouse, made the motion for the Sixth and Omaha site.

Afterwards, Carlyle said he was pleased with the unanimous vote for the site. He said there were several possible reasons for the support, including a real consensus among city council members or a weary feeling of wanting to bring the decision-making process to an end.

He said the courthouse site remained attractive, but land acquisition costs there and uncertainty about the coun-

ty's future plans convinced him the Sixth and Omaha site would be better.

Mayor Art LaCroix introduced the site Monday evening as a compromise because, he said, he didn't sense majority support for any of the other six sites being considered.

LaCroix said he had spoken to Dr. Robert J. Zill, a Rapid City dentist who is a co-owner of the property, before the sales tax election in January, and was told that the land at Sixth and Omaha was only for lease, not for sale. (Zill and Maurice H. Biernbaum, both of Rapid City, and Charles H. Balcom of Mitchell own the property.) But in the last couple weeks, the mayor said, he called Zill again, and now the land is for sale.

LaCroix said he thought it was his job to introduce a compromise when the city council seemed to be having trouble making a decision.

"I think it was a hard decision for the council," he said. "They were looking for something they could all agree to, and that wasn't happening.

"I think it's a very positive thing for Rapid City, now and in the future," he said. "The Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Memorial Park, our city hall and the downtown core area will all be tied together. I see very few negatives at all."

The city plans to buy the entire block between the railroad tracks and Omaha Street between Fifth and Sixth streets — 120,000 square feet of land.

According to the tentative plans described by the architects Wednesday evening, the south half of the block would be a parking lot for city employees and possibly for school district employees. The city hall or combined city hall and school administration building would be located in the northwest quarter of the block, and the northeast quarter would be left an open park or plaza for possible expansion.

Total cost estimates are \$3.2 million for a city hall only and \$4.7 million for a combined city hall and school administration building. The city hall budget is \$2.5 million and the school district budget is \$4.7 million.