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Parking plan assessment method needs definition

Adequate and convenient parking in downtown Rapid City has been cussed and discussed for many years.

The most ambitious and comprehensive solution to the problem is embodied in a proposal for a downtown parking district.

The proposal involves six separate lots basically on the perimeter of the downtown core. Total cost of the six projects to accommodate 458 vehicles, if completed, is estimated at \$1.1 million.

It is proposed that 52 percent of that amount come from federal funds acquired by the city under the old urban renewal program, 3 percent from the parking meter fund and the remaining 45 percent from bonds to be paid off from an assessment on property within the parking district.

The key as to whether the project flies depends on acceptance of the parking district assessment by owners of property within the district bounded by Fourth and Ninth streets and the alley north of Main and the alley south of St. Joe Street.

As we see it, the key factor which is missing in the

otherwise comprehensive proposal is the way the cost of retiring bonds will be assessed against property in the district.

The resolution of necessity which has been proposed by the common council and upon which a hearing is scheduled on Monday, Jan. 16, states: "The cost of the facilities to be assessed against benefitted property shall be apportioned according to the benefits to accrue to each lot or tract in the district as determined by the Common Council."

That's a rather open-ended provision which, in our opinion, needs to be tied down before it is presented at a public hearing.

We recognize the difficulty in arriving at an equitable method of assessing on the basis of benefits accruing to property within the district. On the other hand, we think the questions in the minds of most property owners in the district, regardless of how much they favor more parking, is "How much is it going to cost me?" and "How equitable will my assessment be in relation to the fellow down the street or around the corner?"

We think these property owners deserve some answers or some options at the Jan. 16 hearing. Otherwise we predict there will be sufficient opposition to scuttle Rapid City's long sought solution to downtown parking.