



Area along Sixth Street proposed for a parking district park (Staff photo by Don Polovich)

City council creates parking district

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After several years of unsuccessful attempts, the Rapid City Common Council approved establishing a downtown parking district Monday night.

It took nearly two and a half hours of argument and a couple of compromises along with a hotly contested condemnation action on several properties before the council passed the resolution creating the parking district.

The boundaries of the district remain the same as described previously — roughly 10 blocks from Fourth to Ninth and from the alley north of Main, plus portions north of the alley at Eighth, Seventh and Sixth, to the alley south of St. Joseph.

The district permits assessments against property owners to raise \$500,000 as a portion of the money needed to acquire and develop four downtown parking lots and make changes on two existing city-owned lots.

The assessment against property would amount to about 45 percent of the total project cost, estimated at \$1.1 million. The remainder of the money would come from city funds, 3 percent, and federal grants, 52 percent.

Passage of the condemnation action was essential to the entire project, according to City Attorney Ray Woodsend.

This was apparent when two spokesmen from the audience asked for assurance that all the proposed six projects would be completed. Former alderman Charles Swander, a property owner within the district, and Mort Wilkins, another property owner, said they were all for the parking district but wanted all the projects finished.

They also supported the condemnation and razing of the buildings at the corner of Sixth and Main.

These buildings have been an issue among members of the council and on the first vote to delete them from condemnation, that body was split 5 to 5.

Woodsend ruled the motion failed without requiring Mayor Art LaCroix to break the tie. "It didn't get a majority," he stated.

Voting for the deletion of the buildings were Alderman Robert Flit-

tie, Richard Goschke, Robb Swanson, Norma Thomsen and Bill Tubbs. Bernita Loucks, Mike Madden, Lisle Owens, Harold Schmidt and Babe Steinburg voted against.

Swanson offered a compromise which would have left only the Crown Clothing store in condemnation and removed from condemnation the buildings to the west. This failed 6 to 4 vote with Flittie changing his stand.

Other compromises were discussed and the Planning Department displayed drawings of the corner lot from Sears store west, showing the parking configuration in varying degrees of property acquisition.

Swanson said he was trying to make changes that would be more acceptable and get full support for the entire condemnation resolution, which requires a two-thirds majority.

In a final compromise, Swanson asked LaCroix, "Now can we have a park?"

The idea of making a park out of the west 50 feet fronting along Sixth was discussed and Woodsend incorporated a reference to it by adding "including appropriate landscaping" to the condemnation resolution.

Thomsen wanted specific reference to a 50-by-145-foot park but the substitute motion passed 7 to 3 with Thomsen, Tubbs and Flittie voting against.

Effect would be the condemnation and acquisition of the property from the Sears building west to Sixth Street, including the buildings, for redevelopment as a park and parking lot and adding about 150 feet to the existing parking lot.

Other properties included in the condemnation are the Bellamy building, owned by Dr. H. L. Ahrlin, on Seventh Street, and the Industrial Sprinkler building, owned by Northwestern Warehouse, on Rushmore Road.

An offer on the Ahrlin property has been rejected by the owner.

LaCroix and Leonard Swanson, public works director, explained to businessmen in the audience that the assessment would amount to about 5 cents or 6 cents a square foot per year over a 10-year period to raise the \$500,000. This would amount to about \$1

per day for a 50-foot property, they said.

LaCroix said the off-street lots within the district will not be metered but will be policed where there is limited parking. Meters will remain along Main and St. Joseph as a control device for employees.

If it is found that one or more of the lots are not needed, they will be sold at public auction and the proceeds used to retire the bonds. This would result in a reduced assessment later.

Only Tubbs voted against the parking district. Alderman Swanson abstained because his employer, the Rapid City Journal, is a property owner within the district and has recently acquired additional property to the west of the building on Main.

The parking district does not become effective until 20 days after it is published. In the meantime, it is subject to the referendum or could be killed by a protest petition signed by the owners of a majority of the area subject to assessment.

Condemnation proceedings also are subject to the same 20-day waiting period before legal action can be commenced.