

City to proceed with land acquisition for parking in downtown Rapid City

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The Rapid City Common Council, under a different name, voted Wednesday to proceed with acquisition of land at Sixth and Main streets for a parking lot.

The city's 10 aldermen, sitting as the Legal and Finance Committee, decided on a split vote to acquire the land and structures on the northeast corner of the intersection.

Alderman Robb Swanson had asked that the buildings on the corner — A & M Jewelry, Music Monarchs, First Amendment Bookstore, Castle Cafe and Crown Clothing — be excluded.

He said condemnation of the buildings might bring a lawsuit from one of the owners, slowing the project.

Alderman Michael Madden said the council — before Swanson was elected — made a commitment to the downtown merchants to develop the off-street parking lot according to their wishes.

He said the commitment was to a concept, and the council cannot now approve just three-quarters of a concept.

Ron Stephenson, speaking as a downtown merchant, backed Madden. He said open parking areas within line of sight of the stores being served is necessary.

Alderman Richard Goschke complained that the parking lot at Sixth and St. Joseph streets is only used to 13 per cent of its capacity.

Stephenson admitted it takes time for shoppers to develop the habit of using such lots, and to get used to spending that much money to park.

Stephenson said the commitment for the parking lot was made before it was known that Sears and Penney's would be moving out of the downtown area to a shopping mall north of Interstate 90.

But, he said, the fact they are going to move makes it all the more necessary for the city to provide adequate off-street parking in the downtown area.

In other action, the council — sitting as the council in a special meeting — set for hearing a number of liquor license applications.

City Attorney Ray Woodsend accor-

ding to the 1975 interim census, Rapid City is eligible for three additional liquor licenses. However, the city must issue those three licenses before the annexation of land to the east becomes final — if it does.

The canvass of the city's referendum election concerning the canvass is July 29. If the licenses are not issued by then, and the land is annexed, two county liquor license holders in the area will be issued two of the new city licenses.

Woodsend explained that by hurrying the issuance of the licenses, the city could gain five instead of three, since the two in the annexation area could continue to operate regardless of the number granted by the city.

Several members of the council expressed skepticism at issuing the licenses in such a hurry — or even at all.

Madden explained that the council would have until July 25 — the night of the hearing — to decide whether any licenses should be issued.