

Downtown parking proposal hits snag

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Efforts to add city-owned parking for downtown Rapid City almost died Tuesday night when a condemnation proposal failed to get a two-thirds majority.

After the 6 to 4 vote, however, the council agreed to reconsider after a market study on the downtown had been reviewed and the issue rehashed by the legal and finance committee next week.

Last week, the committee split 4 to 3 to recommend proceeding with condemnation of the land and buildings west of the Sears store and warehouse in the 500 block of Main.

The Downtown Parking Board recommended the city acquire the land for parking in a three-phase program. The first acquisition was the corner of Sixth and St. Joseph and the third phase is the acquisition of the corner of Rushmore Road and Main where the old Patton Hotel once stood.

Roger Schneider, chairman of the parking board, and Darwin Jensen, chairman of the chamber's parking committee, both spoke strongly in favor of proceeding with the acquisition.

Alderman Robb Swanson, however, said he still is not convinced the city should buy that much land for parking.

Alderman Richard Goschke wanted a "position report" on the Genje Report (market analysis) concerning what relationship the 500 block of Main has to the 600 and 700 blocks.

Alderman Robert Flittie said he is not "comfortable" with the speed the

city is going to condemnation and he would not be "uncomfortable" with a little delay.

Alderman Michael Madden said the issue has been "kicked around and delayed long enough."

Alderwoman Bernita Loucks said the parking problem is one "we've had for a long time and further delay is not going to make it go away."

Several of the merchants leasing the buildings subject to condemnation wondered where they could go and what will happen to their leases.

City Atty. Ray Woodsend explained that under condemnation there is compensation for "lease holder's interest" but there is no relocation assistance as under urban renewal.

Jensen suggested the renters contact the owners of the Penney's and Sears buildings, which will become vacant within the next two years.

Woodsend said the plan is to acquire the property with revenue bonds which would be retired from parking meter receipts and a \$70,000 commitment from a few downtown businessmen who had accepted the council's challenge to "do something to help themselves" on the parking problem.