

Barnett suggests removal of meters

By DICK REBBECK
Journal Farm Editor

Removal of parking meters as one step in major overhaul of Rapid City downtown parking was suggested by Mayor Don Barnett as "something to think over" when he met Thursday with the agriculture committee of the Rapid City Chamber of Commerce.

Barnett noted that Rapid City's economy is dependent upon Air Force payroll, tourism and agriculture "and if any one of the three fails we're in trouble."

In attracting out-of-town trade, particularly farm and ranch business, Rapid City's image is severely tar-

nished by its downtown parking situation, including the inhospitable \$4 parking fine, he added. Another sore point, he has found, is the absence of parking for farm and ranch trucks near the core business district.

Toward a solution, Barnett asked the chamber committee to consider creation of a downtown parking district. Key elements would include assessments for creating public parking lots and employers providing employe parking to keep public parking available for customers.

But he went on to urge "courage to take the jump" into new territory and perhaps abolish parking meters.

Such action would be expensive, the

mayor agreed. Loss of goodwill among farm and ranch people, however, could prove much more costly, he said, suggesting that just a few sales gained by attracting shoppers to the core area would easily make up for a store's share of a parking program.

"The revenue reaped would be super," he declared. "But it's up to business to provide for the assessments and the employe parking."

Agriculture committee members generally agreed the lack of parking downtown and the slap in the face of a parking ticket is an irritant to out-of-town people who may have willingly just spent hundreds of dollars in the stores.

Parking is just one problem in rural-urban relations, though, committee members added. Discussion indicated other facets of the problem include discourtesy or don't-care attitudes by sales people, lack of support by businessmen of major agricultural events in Rapid City, opinions that farmers and ranchers live off taxpayers and air pollution that makes Rapid City unpleasant to visit for any reason.

The committee set 7:30 p.m. Dec. 16 for a special meeting to study the whole matter of rural-urban relations, what the problems might be and what projects might be launched to improve Rapid City's reputation as a trade center for a large agricultural region