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Council moves to cut \$5 parking fine

By BOB FELL
Journal Staff Writer

The Rapid City Common Council passed first reading Monday night of an ordinance that would give token relief to motorists parking overtime in the two-hour zone downtown.

Consensus of the council was that reducing the \$5 fine to \$2 is not the solution to the problem but, as Alderman Al Wilson commented, "It is a step in the right direction."

Wilson had wanted to eliminate the fine altogether but was voted down. Alderman Harold Schmidt commented that "if this (reducing the fine) is not the solution, then I think we ought to kill the ordinance until we do find one."

Junior Alderman Bob Flittie wondered if "there is some way we can handle the \$5 fine administratively" until a solution is found.

Wilson said he feels the solution is to provide more off-street parking in the core area. But that will take time and money. It is not the answer to the police chief's request, he said.

Police Chief Rae Neal has recommended eliminating the \$5 fine and the two-hour limit zone in the downtown business district. The limited time parking and meters are not compatible and have led to confusion, especially with out-of-town shoppers, he has stated.

The difficulty in explaining the double system has resulted in numerous complaints.

Schmidt, Charles Swander and Bob Apa voted against passing the first reading in the 6-3 favorable vote.

Later in the meeting, Mayor Don Barnett asked the council for a recommendation on using what he said was \$155,000 in the Parking Lot and Area Fund. He asked if the council felt the money should be used to apply toward the purchase of an off-street parking lot downtown. (According to city records, the balance in the Parking Lot and Area Fund as of the end of May was \$163,947.55).

The mayor said the acquisition of downtown property for off-street parking probably will be one of the items of discussion at a meeting on downtown urban renewal Wednesday night.

In the meantime, the fine for overtime parking in the two-hour zone downtown has not been eliminated. It must go through a second reading (public hearing) and publication. It will not become effective until 20 days after publication unless there is an emergency clause attached.