

## Council OKs new parking permit plan

By Jeanne Davant

Manitou Springs City Council approved a new parking permit plan designed to open up spaces for visitors and help relieve the acute shortage of parking downtown.

The new plan would require business owners and employees to buy permits to park in one of the city-owned lots on Canon Avenue and Prospect Place or the Metro District's new Schmischny lot at the west end of Manitou Avenue. Permit parking in the Metro District-owned Wichita lot would be allowed, if at all, only on a very limited, case-by-case basis.

A decision by the Metro District not to allow permit parking in the Wichita lot was one of the factors that spurred the new permit plan.

At least 180 permits would be sold to employees, business owners and some residents at costs ranging from \$2.50 to \$20 a month. The program is expected to go into effect by July 1. The monthly fees would be paid through the end of September, but permits would be effective through the end of the year.

Some downtown businesses are required to buy permits. According to the city Planning Department, 96 permits were required this year and another 130 were also purchased. The plan is designed to accommodate the businesses that are required to purchase permits and some of the other current permit holders, including downtown residents.

It is not intended to apply to the entire year, parking consultant Casey Jones said.

"Your environment here is very different during the summer season. I would suggest much less (regulation) in terms of the off-season.... The idea was to buy you some time to get through the end of the year," Jones said. He added that Manitou "is the most acute challenge I've ever seen in my career."

"We have to do something," Metro District President Dave Symonds said, "if it means for three months of the year we're asking employees and the residents of downtown to do a little bit more for the economic benefit of our city."

The plan, which first came before Council last week, provoked opposition from business owners and residents who filled Council chambers Tuesday night.

Allison Bopp, whose home and business are across the street from the Canon Avenue lot, objected to 50 percent of the spaces in that lot going to permit parking for employees.

"I really rely on the Canon Avenue lot for visitor parking, for visibility of my businesses," Bopp said.

Jerell Klaver, owner of Salus Natural Body Care, said he was concerned about where he will park his delivery truck.

"Don't forget us merchants," Klaver said. "We need quality of life too."

Farley McDonough, owner of Adam's Mountain Cafe, said she was worried about the safety of employees who would have to walk to the Schmischny lot late at night.

### Parking permit fees for 2010

Parking permits will be sold for the remainder of the summer season at the following lots. The number of spaces within each lot follows the lot's name.

- Canon Avenue, 45 spaces: 20 permits at \$20 per month
  - Schmischny, 42 spaces: 65 permits at \$12.50 per month
  - Prospect Place, 45 spaces: 68 permits at \$5 per month
  - High school, 30 spaces: 30 permits sold at \$2.50 per month
  - Evening-only permits for all lots, 4 p.m.-10 a.m.: 218 permits at \$2.50 per month
  - Other private properties: number of spaces and permits to be determined; \$5-\$20 per month
- The Schmischny and Prospect Place lots will be "oversold," since it is expected that permit holders will be parking there at different times of the day and evening.
- For more information, call 685-4398.

"Several of my employees are also concerned about their cars," McDonough said.

Canon Avenue resident Jack Elder said downtown residents who live above shops on Manitou and Canon Avenue face hardships under the new plan.

"There are people in the neighborhood who should not be asked to walk three or four blocks to carry their groceries," Elder said. "We don't deserve to be shunted aside for three months."

Manitou Springs resident Rick Laurenzi said he has identified 40 to 50 extra parking spots that currently are unavailable because they are marked off by yellow paint. He said he had shown these spots to three Council members. Laurenzi called the Metro District's decision about the Wichita lot "draconian and self-serving" and "not fair to our citizens."

"I'm heavily impacted by this proposal," said former Manitou Mayor George Miller, who lives near the Prospect Place lot. "It seems to me a commercial parking lot in the middle of a purely residential district is probably wrong."

Miller said there were issues with increasing the use of the Prospect Place lot, including dust, drainage and far more vehicle trips on the street.

"It certainly needs to be considered real completely in terms of the environmental impact and the impact on the neighborhood," Miller said.

City Planner Michelle Anthony said there is no budget to make significant improvements to the Prospect Place lot but that future plans call for installing parking blocks, cleanup, grading, stabilization, landscaping and possibly paving. Residents would be able to buy permits for the lot.

Many other details of the plan have not been worked out because it was urgent to get something in place for the summer season, Anthony said.

Council voted 5-2 to adopt the plan, with Council members Michael Gerbig and Aimee Cox dissenting.

Gerbig said he viewed the plan as a major change with unknown outcomes.

"It's not going to work anecdotally to tell if it's busy or not," he said. "How are we going to tell at the end of the summer if all these things worked? How do we know we're successful? I don't know if all this needs to be changed in a week."

Cox said she did not support "the idea of putting 68 permits in a residential zone (i.e., the Prospect lot) without a plan. I don't see any priority in this given to residential users." Cox suggested postponing the vote "until we get some answers."

Snyder, who voted for the plan, said he was willing to give it a try for the summer.

"If there are problems we hadn't anticipated, we would certainly be reactive," he said.

Snyder firmly cautioned Jones that a more comprehensive plan for the rest of the year needs to be presented to Council before the end of September.

"Moving forward, we're going to have to take this up in a much more timely fashion," Snyder said.

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