

## **We're in the money**

### **June picks up in Manitou Springs**

**By Jeanne Davant**

Manitou Springs is having the most profitable year in the past five years, according to the latest sales tax collection figures.

Taxable sales soared to more than \$6.5 million in June and increased 16.5 percent over June of last year, Deputy Finance Director Becca Davis told City Council on Tuesday night.

For 2010 through June, taxable sales are running 9.1 percent ahead of last year. Taxable sales through June total more than \$23 million and are running ahead of the totals for every year from 2005 through 2009.

As you'd expect, downtown retail shops, lodging and restaurants picked up the most in June. Revenues from motels, bed and breakfast establishments and other lodging increased nearly 32 percent compared with June 2009. Sales in gift shops and other retail stores grew 24.5 percent over last June, and restaurants saw their taxable sales increase by 17 percent compared with the same month of last year.

Amusements and bars were down 29 percent for June but still are running 30 percent ahead of last year to date; food and gas stores dropped 1.2 percent for June and 2.1 percent for the year to date. The sales tax figures are composites for each economic sector.

Compared with last year, overall taxable sales have increased every month except for slight decreases in April and May.

### **Enforcement too strong, some say**

Also Tuesday, Council heard from several citizens who are concerned about enforcement by the Police Department in and around Soda Springs Park.

Alexis Kegel said she had received a \$90 ticket for obstructing the sidewalk while sitting on the bridge over Fountain Creek.

"I feel like (this is) a wishy-washy interpretation of this ordinance," she said. "I don't think I was obstructing the sidewalk ... I know that there's been complaints about the way people are acting. I'm not one of those people. I'm one of the first people out there who's saying, 'hey, guys, don't do that.'"

Kegel said she had witnessed other people sitting on the bridge who were not ticketed.

"I don't think I was guilty of this offense. I think I'm being profiled," she said.

Several people spoke in support of Kegel.

"I love this town because of the diversity," said Andrew Ruden, "(but it is) perceived that we don't want a lot of people hanging out in front of the Mate. I know they clog the sidewalk, but they still have to be dealt with respect. I hope this doesn't continue, because it's going to raise a lot of bad publicity."

Peter Wolf, owner of the Mate Factor, said there were belligerent people among the group earlier this summer but that they have moved on.

"I don't understand where the law is coming from," Wolf said. "Many times, if you're sitting on the wall, you're not obstructing the sidewalk."

He also pointed out that the area in front of Patsy's "is always clogged, much more so than in front of our establishment... We 100 percent support the Police Department, but this one seems to be pushing just a little too far."

"I feel there is a possibility that there is selective enforcement going on there," said Rob Heckel, who added, "I think it's a sad thing that Manitou is getting this kind of reputation" of overzealous enforcement.

Coreen Toll and Donna Elder said they thought Kegel's ticket should be dismissed.

"I really like how forthcoming she (Kegel) is in coming to Council and monitoring negative behavior," Toll said.

Mayor Pro Tem Aimee Cox, who presided over Tuesday's meeting, said Council had asked the Police Department to do additional enforcement in the park area.

"A lot of people were feeling very uncomfortable," Cox said, "so we did send a police officer to spend some time in the park to address other things," including drinking, drug use and unleashed dogs.

Police Chief Mary Jo Smith said she had had reports of people lying on the sidewalk and backpacks and guitar cases blocking people's passage.

"I had complaints from business owners that they felt intimidated by that area," Smith said. "We had a group there from early morning until late at night, whereas at Patsy's, they get their ice cream or popcorn and leave."

Smith said officers have issued numerous warnings and issued 17 citations since enforcement has stepped up. The majority of the citations were for offenses like skateboarding off the stage of the pavilion, theft, alcohol use and disorderly conduct.

Smith said in some cases officers' warnings have been ignored and that citations are being issued to people who have been warned once or twice before.

"We're not making up laws (or) trying to create a hostile area," Smith said. "We want to make it a nice -area for everyone."

Councilman Matt Carpenter said he is able to run through the Patsy's area without trouble, but "those people have intimidated me to the point I don't want to ask them to move. We're trying to address a serious problem."

Cox said she would meet with Kegel and Smith "to talk about what we can do. As Council, we have to address bad behavior. (But) we do not believe in selective enforcement. We do not want that to happen.... We will take action on this and see what more we can do to make the town more friendly."

### **In other business, Council...**

- Unanimously passed on second reading an ordinance that gives the Municipal Court the authority to order the destruction of dangerous animals.

- Granted waivers or reductions in fees for the Ugly Christmas Sweater Fun Run on Dec. 18, the Emma Crawford Coffin Races on Oct. 30, the Holiday Parade on Dec. 11 and Yoga for Peace on Sept. 19. The vote in each case was 5-1, with Carpenter dissenting. As he has in the past, Carpenter stated that he is voting against fee waivers because he is concerned about the costs to the city these fees were intended to cover. While he supports the events themselves, "I think people should pay for their events," he said. Cox reminded event planners that a tougher fee waiver policy will be in place next year.

- Appointed Keith Schoepflin to the Open Space Advisory Committee and Ann Nichols to the Urban Renewal Authority Board.

[Return to Article Index](#)