

Council sets parking fee for Barr Trail lot

By Jeanne Davant

Users of the Barr Trail parking lot will soon have to pay \$5 at a kiosk and display a tag to park in the newly paved lot.

Manitou Springs City Council adopted the fee Tuesday night and instructed Planning Director Dan Folke to purchase a kiosk as soon as possible. Folke hopes to have the kiosk installed by Memorial Day. The kiosk will dispense a ticket when a user inserts a credit or SmartCard. Cash will not be accepted.

The Manitou Incline Plan recommended a tiered fee schedule for the lot, with higher rates for short-term users and lower rates for long-term parkers. But city staff was unable to find the kind of equipment at a reasonable price that would enable parkers to check in when they arrived and check out upon leaving.

"I do think this would be the most effective way to encourage long-term parking," Folke said, but the only technology that could time-stamp tickets would require a security gate and would cost about \$100,000. He said the kiosk will cost about \$9,000, an amount that's already budgeted for the project.

Folke said he hopes the \$5 daily fee will help to reduce some of the traffic on Hydro Street.

"Up to 600 cars are going up there on weekends," he said. "If the impact is not as much as we'd like, we can consider seasonal, daily parking commonly called congestion pricing. If you come in during peak times, you pay a higher fee." Lower fees could be charged during the winter.

Folke said the long-term goal is to implement a variable rate structure to discourage short-term use of the lot.

The lot was closed last week for paving, and the work increased the number of spaces from 34 to 40, Folke said.

Public Works Director Bruno Pothier said the paving and striping costs would total about \$40,000.

Council approved a \$5-per-day fee for the lot in June 2009 but later learned that Colorado Springs Utilities owned the lot. An agreement with CSU was approved in May 2010 that allows Manitou to collect parking fees for the lot.

Folke said implementing paid parking in the Barr Trail lot is the first step in solving congestion and parking problems on Ruxton Avenue that have been attributed primarily to Incline users.

The Planning Department recommended that additional steps be implemented over the rest of this year, including:

- Three-hour parking zones on Ruxton between Pilot Knob and Osage avenues
- A residential parking program on Ruxton that allows some daytime use by non-residents
- Working with Barr camp to offer a parking pass for overnight parking in the Barr Trail lot, on Ruxton and in other surface lots
- Continued traffic counts on Hydro Street
- Seasonal, daily and hourly variable pricing in the Barr Trail lot

How green is Manitou? It's the greenest

For the second straight year, Manitou Springs has won the Greenest Community award sponsored by Veda Salon and the Catamount Institute.

Mayor Marc Snyder said Tuesday that the city was up against Fort Carson, Fountain and Colorado Springs Downtown and was selected with more than 56 percent of the vote.

"We have a very good reputation for being leaders in sustainable practices," Snyder said.

- Education and promotion of citywide parking options, including free 72-hour parking on parts of Manitou Avenue and El Paso Boulevard, annual passes, evening passes and SmartCard discounts in other city lots.

An annual evening permit for the Smischny lot, six-tenths of a mile below the Incline trail head, can be purchased for \$30, Folke pointed out, and permit holders qualify for a discounted SmartCard.

Also Tuesday, Council unanimously approved on first reading an ordinance designating different colors for restricted parking zones: yellow for no-parking zones; Blue for ADA-designated parking; green for loading zones and other parking-restricted areas; and red for fire lanes.

In other business, Council...

- Approved an art gallery permit for Mountain Living Studio, which will allow the service of complimentary alcoholic beverages during events 15 days per year

- Approved an on-call services agreement with NV5, formerly Nolte

- Approved a new hotel and restaurant liquor license for Crystal Park Cantina at 178 Crystal Park Road. The restaurant occupies the former Mission Bell Inn and is owned and operated by Justin Armour and Susan Pisaneschi.

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