

## **Permits, shuttle service among popular ideas at workshop**

**By Larry Ferguson**

Nearly a hundred Manitou Springs residents and business owners met with city officials last week to sort out the good, the bad and the ugly ... ideas, that is.

The goal of the public workshop at City Hall was to identify possible solutions to Manitou's summertime parking problems and then pass on recommendations to the city's parking authority board. The board, in turn, will advise city council in the development of a comprehensive parking plan.

"We can't continue to do what we've been doing," said Planning Director Dan Folke, who helped conduct the workshop. "We need to address some of these (parking) issues."

Among the most popular recommendations to come out of the workshop:

- develop a plan for dealing with the influx of traffic for special events;
- improve the signage and technology that informs visitors about available parking in the downtown area and in the lots;
- create a free parking permit program for residents, and implement it in neighborhoods that are impacted the most by visitor parking;
- operate a shuttle or trolley on summer weekends and for special events to reduce parking pressure in the downtown area.

Among the least popular ideas:

- create year-round or seasonal paid parking in the downtown commercial area using multi-space kiosks;
- purchase the Tajine Alami property at 10 Old Man's Trail for an estimated \$1.9 million to \$2.4 million, demolish the building, and create a 191 -space parking lot.
- create a residential parking permit program that will be required in all neighborhoods.

Deemed the worst idea:

- create a year-round trolley/ shuttle program.

Tweed Kezziah and Susan Watkins of Kezziah Watkins, a consulting and research firm specializing in strategic and long-term planning, conducted the workshop.

In attendance were a number of city officials, including Mayor Marc Snyder, council members Matt Carpenter and Rick Barry, City Planner Michelle Anthony and former mayors Marcy Morrison and Bud Ford.

Workshop participants were presented with 27 "options" or possible actions to help alleviate the parking woes that annually beset the city. The options/actions were compiled from a variety of sources, including a comprehensive study of parking problems conducted four years ago by Carl Walker Inc. of Tempe, Ariz., in-person and on-line surveys of both residents and visitors, and input from previous public workshops.

Also discussed at the workshop were cost estimates, subject to further research, of some of the options.

Participants divided into 10 groups, and each group rated the options on a scale of 0 to 10. All the groups' ratings were then added together for an overall score. A score of 100 represented total support while 0 represented no support.

Topping the list with a score of 97 was an option to develop a special events parking plan. Such a plan could help alleviate parking frustrations and thereby increase the city's ability to

continue to attract visitors for special events in the future, according to information provided by city staff.

Coming in a close second with a score 96 was an option that called for making improvements to signage and technology to provide real-time information about the availability of parking in the downtown area and in the parking lots. The technology would include electronic message boards in addition to standard road signage.

A related option — creating signage and message boards east of downtown to encourage the use of free parking there — rated a 94 score.

The downside to real-time technology and variable message boards, workshop organizers pointed out, are the costs, which could be "significant," according to city staff.

Also scoring in the 90s was a proposal to pursue shared parking agreements for the use of private/ public parking lots, namely at churches and schools. Such arrangements could create spaces for both employees and visitors. However, the administration of the program — and several other options such as creating a free residential parking permit program in specific neighborhoods— would probably require the hiring of a full-time parking manager at an estimated cost of \$68,000, according to material provided by workshop organizers.

A plan to inaugurate a seasonal trolley/shuttle service received a rating of 89. According to the city, such a program could be provided by Mountain Metro, Transit at a cost of \$100 and hour. The service would operate on seasonal weekends and during special events only at an estimated cost of \$40,000.

Some of the other options and their ratings included:

- creating parking for tour buses out of the downtown area (86);
- continuing the current program of using an hourly rate and using parking passes and smart cards that offer discounts of up to 50 percent in parking lots (76);
- building a three-level parking structure at the Wichita lot on the east edge of the downtown area at an estimated cost of \$4.2 million (72). A new structure could expand the lot's capacity from 80 spaces to 284, but would also create considerable long-term debt;
- purchasing the Tajine Alami property at 10 Old Man's Trail and instead of razing the building, renovate it to provide space for city office and events (65). The estimated cost of the project is between \$2.9 to \$3.4 million.
- restricting the hours of use in the middle lane of Manitou Avenue to increase public safety, enhance traffic flow, and simplify enforcement (59).

A complete list of options and their rating scores is scheduled to be posted on the city's Website at [www.manitouspringsgov.com](http://www.manitouspringsgov.com) in the future.

[Return to Article Index](#)