

Concerned musicians address Council

By Anthony Welch

Manitou resident Benjamin Hatfield took full advantage of the public comment portion at the Manitou City Council regular meeting Tuesday night. He voiced a number of concerns, including allegations of police harassment.

Joined by a dozen of friends and supporters, Hatfield, a musician, said he and other street musicians were being harassed by police officers near the area of Soda Springs Park. Hatfield and others have received several tickets from officers for allegedly blocking the sidewalk near the Mate Factor, he said.

"There's no reason to come up and aggressively ask us to stop playing music. This is an artistic, small community. We are all here to help the community," Hatfield said. "We're not criminals."

Hatfield said he and others have spoken with the owners of Mate Factor and they have no issue with the street musicians. Hatfield added live music can be heard blaring from bars in downtown Manitou as late as 1 a.m., yet he and other street musicians are told they have to stop playing at 10 p.m.

While Hatfield said musicians are courteous and make way for pedestrians on the sidewalk, Councilman Matt Carpenter said he's personally experienced that's not always the case.

Carpenter feels people aren't comfortable in Soda Springs Park with some of the activities going on. He added that there's been numerous times when he couldn't get through the sidewalk in that area. Carpenter said he's received a number of calls from concerned residents.

"I don't think that's a place where you should be, basically, living all day long," he said.

Councilwoman Aimee Cox said some of what officers are enforcing has to do with an ordinance Council approved in the past. That ordinance says no person shall perform in a public place, except during the following hours: Sunday through Thursday, between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. and Friday and Saturday, between 7 a.m. and midnight. However, that wouldn't explain why they're being told to stop at 10 p.m. That same ordinance does talk about not obstructing sidewalks, as well.

"We have to strike the balance between free speech and what makes people uncomfortable," Cox said.

Cox said she has concerns with some of Hatfield's claims and asked City Administrator Jack Benson to have the police department provide Council with a report. Cox encouraged Hatfield and his friends to attend the next regular meeting on Aug. 2, where Council might have Police Chief Maryjo Smith give a report.

Hatfield also cited a few other concerns his group had about the city. They've noticed a ton of trash around town, especially after large events. Hatfield said he and others have voluntarily cleaned up a ton of trash near Fountain Creek and want to do their part to keep the city nice.

Hatfield also asked if the City could place compost bins next to garbage cans. He said he or others would gladly empty them each day. Keeping with that, Hatfield also suggested that the City turn its flower beds downtown into fruit and vegetable gardens.

Cox said that would be stuff Council would have to talk about and would involve maintenance issues. She mentioned the idea had been brought up before and people were concerned with rotting fruit and vegetables littering those areas.

Councilman Gerbig said he appreciated the group wanting to get involved and advised them to get involved with the Manitou Springs Forward effort and attend an upcoming event.

Assault on the Peak special event request

Council approved a special event request for Assault on the Peak for Aug. 28. The event was approved with conditions that Council is provided with a comprehensive parking plan for the event. Councilman Rick Barry voiced concerns about the increasing number of large events taking place in Manitou.

"We have to look at what's happening to our businesses downtown," he said. "What's happening with our parking? Are we selling out our city for an event that's cutting the throat of us who live here year round?" Barry said as a business owner he only saw an increase in shoplifting and decrease in sales when big events took place in the city.

Councilwoman Coreen Toll disagreed and said she owned a business in Old Colorado City for 24 years. During Territory Days, Toll said her business didn't see an increase in sales, however she had many people come into her store for the first time, many who became regular customers.

"It was free advertising in a way," she said.

In other business, Council...

- Read a proclamation declaring August Colorado Masonic Month
- Declined a banner hanging request from the Craft Lager Fest because it conflicts with a banner for the Pikes Peak Marathon, which was approved in October.

[Return to Article Index](#)