

Downtown Parking Discussion Animates Falls City Council Meeting

(KTNC) - A lively discussion on downtown parking issues consumed much of the time during Monday's Falls City, City Council meeting. The issue was placed on the agenda after questions arose over a supposed ordinance limiting parking to two hours in the downtown area. No ordinance exists, but the concept of two hour parking was included as part of the Downtown Revitalization plans the council approved in 2010.

Main Street Executive Director Eric Barr explained what the organization would like to see happen regarding the limited downtown parking spaces. (play audio :26)

Barr pointed to the 2010 Downtown Revitalization Plan, prepared by RDG, which indicated there are approximately 615 parking on and off street parking spaces between Harlan and Chase Streets. He also explained a case study that concluded the average value of an on-street parking space in a main street district is between \$3,000 and \$5,000 per year.

City council members said they had not heard any positive comments about the proposed two-hour parking limit.

The council received letters from Richardson County and State of Nebraska employees who work at the Courthouse, and from District Court Clerk Pam Scott, opposing two-hour parking.

Mayor Tim Hersh spoke to their concerns. (play audio :53)

City Clerk Gary Jorn, said retailers need to understand how valuable the parking spaces are – and spaces need to be free, especially around the Courthouse. He stopped short of suggesting there needs to be an ordinance. (play audio :24)

Mary Whitehouse, owner of Mary's Appliance, voiced her complaint with what she said is a lack of communication. She said downtown business owners feel they haven't been asked for their input throughout the Main Street process. (play audio :51)

Whitehouse said she feels Stone Street retailers could self-police the parking issue. Jorn said several business owners have come to the city council over the years requesting a one-hour parking limit in front of their business under another ordinance.

The council took no action on the parking issue Monday night, but tabled the issue until further notice.