DOWNTOWN PARKING ISSUES

Council requested this special meeting to discuss parking issues in general in the downtown. The meeting is the result of a July 8, 2004 memo from the Downtown Task Force proposing Council eliminate the two hour parking restrictions on Pine Street, Ruby Street, and on 4th Avenue between Pine and Ruby Streets, with the stipulation that the business owners be notified of this change in advance. Council reviewed statistics compiled by the Police Department on parking citations issued in the downtown as well as maps showing the various downtown parking limitations. At this time, the City does not have a plan for addressing parking in the downtown. Any changes would be a policy decision on Council’s part. The City has purchased the half block between 1st and 2nd Avenues that faces Pine Street in anticipation of developing a lot for additional patron parking and public parking for the Library and Hal Holmes Center. It is possible this lot could provide some off street parking for downtown employees and business owners. During the upcoming budget meetings Council will see a proposal from the Library and Hal Holmes Center to develop this lot for additional patron and public parking. Should Council decide to make changes in parking, staff requests Council consider ease of enforcement. Also, any changes should be made at a regular Council meeting with business owners receiving advance notification of the proposed changes.

Council took comments from the audience. Several downtown business owners spoke in support of eliminating the two hour parking restrictions. It is impossible for the average visitor to do everything they would like to do in the downtown in two hours. Some speakers believe there is a direct correlation between the lack of parking and loss of businesses. Another plan for parking is needed. Other business owners spoke about their encounters with out of town visitors who have received parking tickets. Employees’ parking in the downtown continues to be a problem. Some type of employee parking adjacent to the downtown core is needed. Some speakers felt most downtown business owners would not have a problem telling their employees to park a couple of blocks away. David Cross, business owner and Downtown Task Force member believes eliminating two hour parking in the downtown is not an effective resolution and will create another set of problems. In answer to Council inquiry, the Task Force has tried unsuccessfully in the past through personal contact with business owners to restrict their employee’s parking in the downtown.
Martin Kaatz, Downtown Task Force member, questioned whether the Police Department can provide data on time of day, day of week and location of citations written in the downtown. The new Clancy parking system is capable of compiling this information. The system has improved enforcement time and the Department has made a concentrated effort to get its code enforcement officers into the downtown. In answer to Council inquiry, with the new system it would not be difficult to implement a warning citation to replace the first parking citation.

The possibility for public parking at the new City Hall during non-office hours was briefly discussed. Council discussed changing the first downtown parking citation to a warning and perhaps adjusting Saturday parking limitations based upon additional citation data to be provided by the Police Department. Council discussed the need for improved parking signage and visible maps in the downtown showing available parking and time restrictions. A survey of downtown business owners to determine parking preferences was also discussed. It may be possible to partner with the Ellensburg Downtown Association to develop the survey data.

Council requested staff provide data on downtown citations detailing location, time of day, and day of week for the September 7 regular meeting. Council would like to see proposed ordinance language that would change the initial $25.00 citation to a warning citation, along with crafted language on the warning citation for business patrons/tourists. Additionally Council would like maps available in the downtown showing available parking and time limitations as soon as possible as well as posting the information on the City’s website.

**ADJOURN** Adjourn at 8:45 p.m. Carlson

Affirmed

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Mayor

ATTEST: __________________________________

City Clerk