



THE TAOS NEWS

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Editorial

Still waiting for a long-term solution to parking

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Taos Town Councilor Fred Peralta floated a tired idea at a March 24 work-study session: Raise parking rates from 50 cents to \$1 an hour. We will be blunt. Unless this is part of a comprehensive plan to address downtown parking, we believe this is just another ho-hum idea from the town's current leadership. The town brings in about \$95,000 a year via meters. When the town council suddenly voted to double rates in 2013, the increase was expected to bring in an additional \$113,000.

Peralta says meters are an obvious way to raise revenue to make upgrades downtown or stage public events.

Whoa. Remember what happened when the Crdova administration raised parking fees to a buck late in 2013?

Downtown merchants pitched a fit. They complained the higher rates were driving away business in an already shaky economy. So just before the March 2014 election the parking hike was rescinded through a unanimous vote of the then-council, including Peralta.

The backpedaling was mostly political, but there was also some common sense in the decision: The former mayor and councilors stressed the need to do a comprehensive study before making any changes to how parking is handled.

Like downtown traffic, downtown parking is a longstanding problem that gets brought up from time to time but nothing gets done. And the problem is much bigger than meters.

The town pays \$61,000 a year to rent spaces for parking downtown. In one lot, the town pays \$786 per space and another, \$588 per year. That's pretty steep.

We believe the money spent leasing spaces could be spent better elsewhere, say towards the construction of a tasteful parking garage. If the town uses meters, it would make sense to install one that requires purchasing tickets at a machine. That way one machine is emptied of money rather each meter. And people without change could use a credit card.

But first we have to have a plan, not knee-jerk decisions sure to bog the town down for weeks.

We were hoping the Barrone administration would tackle our parking and traffic problems But outside of Peralta's proposal to raise rates, we haven't heard a peep.