

City hires consultant for parking study

By CAROL MALLEY

Parking fees in downtown Springfield are low, and there is an overall parking surplus — although some areas are overused, according to a consultant hired by Springfield Parking Authority.

The consultant was hired to develop a comprehensive parking plan, including a proposal for refinancing the authority's \$24-million debt.

Springfield Parking Authority voted yesterday to hire Peat Marwick Main & Co. of Washington,

D.C., in association with Vanasse Hangen Brustlin of Boston, to do the parking study at a cost of \$83,600.

Peat Marwick is an accounting firm; Vanasse Hangen is an engineering firm. The two have done parking studies together, including one in Orlando, Fla.

The proposal by Peat Marwick was selected from among six received by the authority.

The statement about the overall parking surplus and fees was made in the proposal. The study

has not begun and will take 17 weeks, according to Allan R. Andrews, executive director of the authority.

Hiring of Peat Marwick was recommended by a selection committee consisting of Benoit, Parking Authority member Michael J. Crowley, Springfield Central Executive Director Carlo Marchetti and Principal Planner Robert Oakes.

"Parking fees tend to be low in downtown Springfield and there are definitely variations in

charges among locations in proximity to one another," the proposal by Peat Marwick says.

The authority will be considering a fee hike for the coming fiscal year.

"The city is committed to building several major parking facilities in the downtown area, the proposal says.

"What needs to be evaluated is how effectively the downtown parking supply is being utilized now and, more importantly, in the future," the proposal says.

"Areas where the parking sup-

ply is highly utilized or even overutilized should be identified in order to determine deficiencies and develop improvement strategies.

"Similarly, areas with an excess of parking should be identified so that strategies to improve utilization can be developed."

The study will consist of the following eight tasks, according to the proposals:

- Develop and analyze parking supply, demand and related information.

- Assess authority's parking system.

- Review and evaluate on-street parking management.

- Project demand and supply requirements.

- Identify the authority's role toward enhancing economic development.

- Develop a geographic territory for the authority.

- Prepare financial feasibility projections.

- Document and present conclusions and methodologies.

\$400,000 vowed for lake

By PHYLLIS ANDREONI

State Rep. Raymond A. Jordan, D-Springfield, said last night that the proposed cleanup of Lake Massasoit has received a significant boost through a "strong commitment" for \$400,000 from the Department of Environmental Management under its Rivers and Harbors Program.

Jordan, who is spearheading the drive for state funds for the project with state Rep. Anthony M. Scibelli, also D-Springfield, said the city now has nearly \$1.1 million for the project which is projected to cost \$1.6 million.

The \$1.1 million includes approximately \$400,000 which Mayor Richard E. Neal and the City Council have agreed to set aside and a \$276,000 grant received previously from the state Division of Water Pollution Control, Jordan said.

Jordan and Scibelli addressed a full house at a meeting of the Lake Massasoit Association, a group formed in 1980 to promote lake improvements. The meeting was held in Loveland Chapel on Springfield College's East Campus.

Jordan said money is available to make the project a reality and that two proposals for funding will have to be written, addressing the issues of citizen involvement and dredging. He said installing a boat ramp will make any proposal for funding more viable.

Scibelli said that he thrives on difficult problems, such as those presented by restoring the lake for recreational activities. He praised Jordan for his work with the association and said "Between us, you've got two of the greatest guys in the business. If money is to be had, we'll get it."

Rita Coppola, director of the city's Lake Restoration Program, described Lake Massasoit's history and outlined the major problems to be overcome at the lake, including sediment, bacteria, runoff from storm drains and algae.

She said that the lake is surrounded by residential, industrial and commercial development and said, "We will have to work with it — and they will have to work with us. We can't go back in time with this lake or any of the lakes in the city."

SC President Frank Falcione said he was "happy with the large turnout" and that he would like to see improvement of the lake.



Staff photo by Vincent S. D'Addario

HOTEL CHARLES ARTIFACTS? — Frances Gagnon, chairwoman of the Springfield Historical Commission, looks over some items of questionable historical significance found at the Hotel Charles. The eating utensils were the subject of a dispute between the city and developer Arthur Yiakas who filed suit to block removal of the items from the hotel.

Hotel developer withdraws suit following return of kitchenware

By CAROL MALLEY and CYNTHIA SIMISON

A developer planning to buy the Hotel Charles and convert it to condominiums had a short fight with the city yesterday over the Springfield Redevelopment Authority's removal of property — including a fork, two spoons and a knife — from the building.

A Historic Commission member said the utensils and four bread dishes, bearing insignias of the Hotel Charles and the demolished Highland Hotel, a former landmark on Hillman and Barnes streets, are worth about \$1 but are historically significant.

Within 24 hours of filing suit in Hampden County Superior Court, developer Arthur Yiakas of Peabody withdrew the action in which he had sought and won a temporary restraining order to bar the SRA from removing personal property from the hotel.

The suit claimed that even though the SRA took the dilapidated hotel by eminent domain, it has no right to the contents.

Yiakas' action followed a Union-News story Wednesday that re-

ported the SRA was conducting an inventory to determine whether there were items of historic significance in the building.

The report said the eating utensils and dishes had been found in the hotel cellar.

Historic Commission Chairman Frances Gagnon said the items removed by the SRA are worth about \$1. She said their value is "as examples of hotel life which is now behind us."

Gagnon said the items are hotel quality silver-plate, "the lowest quality possible. In fact, it is so thin, you can see where it is worn away and the copper is showing through."

Gagnon said an auctioneer "would go begging for a buyer for a shoe box full of \$1."

"These items should be saved because they are local history," she said.

Within a half-hour of being granted the temporary restraining order, Yiakas' attorney Robin Fein, who filed the suit on Wednesday, advised the court that the action would be withdrawn.

She said Yiakas had "come to an agreement" with the SRA that no

more property will be removed, and anything already removed will be "placed in storage and kept for Mr. Yiakas."

But Community Development Commissioner Dominic R. Sarno, who heads the SRA, said the developers advised him they were dropping the suit because there had been "a misunderstanding."

Sarno said no agreement was reached and the authority's inventory will continue.

Sarno said the inventory is being conducted so the agency can comply with a Housing Department order for rubbish removal.

"If we don't own the rubbish," he said prior to withdrawal by Yiakas of the court action, "we will suggest to the owners that they remove it."

"The question is what is considered rubbish and what is considered personal property. If personal property is determined to be a hazard someone has to remove it," he said.

Sarno said he plans to ask the developers to return original architectural drawings for the Charles removed by their architect.

Probe urged of special education problems

By JULIA MAYCOCK

The Springfield School Committee vice chairman yesterday called for a meeting to discuss violations in special education programs, saying the board needs answers from administration.

Raymond M. DiPasquale said a state report citing widespread problems in providing education for emotionally and physically handicapped children is not a surprise.

He said committee members were aware of the investigation, a follow-up to a 1985 audit of the city's special education programs that was prompted by 77 complaints.

State Department of Education officials saw delays in evaluating and placing students in appropriate programs as major areas of concern.

A lack of sufficient materials, supplies, facilities and programs was also found.

Three of five board members surveyed said they want explanations from the administration,

while two said they are confident that problems will be solved without School Committee intervention.

"I don't want to overreact until I hear the reasons," DiPasquale said. "We'll find out why we haven't had compliances."

"Before I pass judgment on whether somebody is not doing their job, I want to hear their side," he said.

The report will be discussed at the board's meeting Thursday, DiPasquale said. At that time, members will set a date for a special meeting to discuss violations in depth, he said.

Characterizing most problems as "administrative," board member Michael J. Albano said he believed progress had been made in the past three years.

"I didn't hear anything negative until I got the report," he said.

"The administrative deficiencies are troubling, but not as troubling as problems with direct services."

Member Allene B. Curto said the committee must have a re-

sponse "to see what efforts have been made and what were the difficulties."

The board received the report late Tuesday afternoon at a collective bargaining session.

Committee members said it is difficult to adhere to the complex special education regulations when the city serves 3,000 students.

"It's a very tough piece of legislation, they're very complex cases," committee member Kenneth E. Shea said, adding that he is confident that the department will resolve problems.

Board member Gerald A. Phillips said he is content with explanations he received in personal talks with administrators.

Mayor Richard E. Neal, chairman of the board, is out of town on personal business. Member Candice E. Lopes could not be reached for comment.

Officials said they will do what is necessary to resolve problems. DiPasquale said, "We'll do whatever it takes to put things back in line."

Springfield school administrators must submit a report by June 17 to the state detailing corrective measures.

Superintendent Thomas J. Donahoe said several steps are being taken to correct problems, including reassigning and adding staff.

Two consultants will also be hired to reorganize the supervisory structure and create new programs, he said.

State officials said Springfield is in danger of losing nearly \$1 million of federal funding earmarked for special education programs if they do not comply with state laws.

But more than \$100 million, all state-federal funding in the schools, is potentially in jeopardy if problems are not resolved, Donahoe said.

Court action is also possible.

Special education operates under a \$16 million budget, with \$13 million coming from the local share of the department's \$68.3 million school budget.

DiPasquale said he does not think the program is underfunded.

Bar Association wins bar rights in barbed talks

By SUSANNAH PUGH

After a hearing that turned into a shouting match, the Springfield License Commission voted last night to allow the Bar Association to continue serving alcohol in its outdoor courtyard.

The courtyard has been the scene of rock'n'roll concerts in past summers. Residents of Chestnut Towers have complained for five years about noise from those concerts invading their homes.

The License Commission voted 3-0 to define the licensed premises to include the outdoor patio-courtyard.

The vote now goes for final approval to the state Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission.

It was an ABCC order that sparked the hearing.

In February, the ABCC ordered the bar to file another license application to resolve questions about the premises licensed under the existing one.

"It appears that the service of alcohol beverages in the parking lot is not permitted by the terms of the license," the order states. The original license approves sales on the "patio."

Bar Association attorney Samuel A. Marsella described the courtyard as including a paved area, or the parking lot, and a stone patio set in part of the paved area.

Marsella said the local board originally approved the license with a map that outlined the entire courtyard. That license then went to the ABCC for final approval, which it received after an ABCC inspection.

Commissioners said later they were fully aware of the premises they originally voted to license.

But City Solicitor Richard T. Egan, acting on behalf of Chestnut Towers tenants, said that the original license only said "patio," not the courtyard or parking lot.

"No outdoor premises should be licensed because of the continuing violations," Egan said.

The Bar Association has pleaded innocent in Hampden County Housing Court to three counts of violating the city's noise ordinance. There has been no determination by the court that violations occurred.

The ABCC, however, found that the concerts violated the city noise ordinance. The ABCC also found that the bar violated an ABCC prohibition against using amplification to advertise the sale of alcohol.

"A nuisance was allowed to be maintained for three or four years," Egan said. He said state law gives the commission jurisdiction over any license that creates a nuisance.

Springfield Commission Chairman Harold Chernock said, "If we have any jurisdiction, we are on the people's side."

But he argued the issue was the entertainment permit for the bar, not its liquor license. He said no complaint has been made about sales of alcohol in the courtyard, just about the music.

Mayor Richard E. Neal, not the commission, issues entertainment permits. The Bar Association has filed an application to renew its entertainment permit.

Commissioner Nicola Gioscia said, "We're talking about two different licenses."

Commissioner Thomas Holland said, "We don't have any authority over the entertainment permit."

Egan said, "The state says you do."

Holland said, "Then, take it to the state. You, sir, have done noth-

ing but offend me today." Egan said, "I don't care ... You've done nothing but wash your hands." * * *

It became difficult, at times, to understand what was being said because commissioners and Egan were shouting at one another simultaneously.

Jewel Reed, a Chestnut Towers resident, argued the commission made the subject of entertainment part of the liquor license when it oversaw a 1984 agreement about the concerts hammered out between the bar and the tenants. The liquor license states that the agreement is part of the liquor license.

Holland said, "We'd agreed informally to act as ombudsman."

He said that despite having concert agreements as part of the liquor license, the commission has jurisdiction over liquor, not entertainment.

Contest clogs thousands of phone lines

By JOHN O'CONNELL and ADAM FISHER

A Springfield radio station's promotional contest rang a sour note for 250,000 New England Telephone Co. customers in the area yesterday.

Telephone company officials said a call-in contest on WHYN-FM caused an overload on circuits from Holyoke to Enfield, Conn., between 4:30 and 5 p.m., resulting in temporary delays of service for an estimated 250,000 customers.

The radio station offered a \$5,000 prize to the 93rd caller who could identify the song, "American Pie," which was playing at the time.

Within minutes, an announcer reported that a West Springfield man won the contest.

But the result of all the attempted calls to the station was that many area residents trying to use their phones at the same time heard nothing on the line for 30 seconds, said Ralph Kendall, public relations manager for New England Telephone.

"The problem arose at the central switching station in Springfield," Kendall said. "Nothing was broken. The volume was simply too heavy."

The problem solved itself, Kendall explained, as those calling the station got off the line.

Marc Berman, general manager of WHYN, said it was the first time the station had tried that particular contest, and he was unaware of the tie-up of phone lines.

"It's a very common promotion throughout the country," Berman said. "It was very successful."

But Berman said he could not say how many people tried to call the station, since workers stopped picking up the contest line after the 93rd call. Neither he nor workers in the news department could identify the contest winner last night.

Kendall said the phone company was concerned enough about the delays that officials contacted WHYN. Berman said he would call the phone company today.

"We're worried about emergencies," Kendall said. "When the system is overloaded that way, everyone's affected. It could be dangerous."

"This station and every other station in Springfield do telephone promotions every day," Berman said.