

Solutions sought for downtown curbs

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Business owner points out step problems for older citizens.

Safety issues involving downtown curbs stepped onto the agenda of Gothenburg City Council members last week.

During open forum at the council's May 4 meeting, local businessman Blaine Peterson said older citizens often have problems with curbs when they leave or return to their vehicles parked downtown because there are two steps.

The co-owner of Peterson's Supermarket said they can hold on to their cars to step up and onto the first curb but have nothing to grasp to maneuver the second step.

"Someday, the lawyers are going to have a field day," he said.

Peterson said he knew of a senior citizen who said she fell and broke a hip because of the curb, noting that the situation will continue to be dangerous unless something is done to change it.

City administrator Bruce Clymer said he knows there's a problem with downtown curbs.

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However when downtown streets and curbs were redone in 2002, cross slopes—or the sidewalk between storefronts and the curb—had to be a certain grade because of the Americans With Disabilities Act.

That meant 12-16-inch tall curbs or two steps, he said.

Clymer said he's noticed railings at high school basketball games that might solve the problem.

He went on to say he found out the name of the supplier of the railings, made contact and said the supplier could visit Gothenburg in mid June to see if they would work downtown.

“If you want to move quicker, we can look at other vendors,” Clymer said, noting that the issue of downtown curbs and safety was also discussed at downtown revitalization meetings.

Dan Yancy, co-owner of Yancy Insurance Agency, said downtown curbs used to be taller before they were redone.

Part of the reason curbs were lowered when redone, he said, was because drivers of newer cars complained of how their bumpers caught on the curbs and sometimes ripped off.

Council president Jeff Kennedy said the railings might cause problems during snow removal but that no system was perfect.

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Peterson suggested slanting the second step to the curb but Clymer said ADA requirements would not allow it.

The council then decided to take a look at the addition of railings.

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