

City to remove parking meters

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WATSONVILLE — Put away those nickels and dimes for parking — the city is taking out its parking meters.

The City Council voted unanimously Tuesday night to remove all 300-plus of the city's meters in favor of time limits for downtown parking.

There will be free, one-hour parking where meters are now, and other city lots will have a three-hour limit. The lot at the library will remain one-hour parking.

The decision to take out the meters comes after a six-month trial period, during which all meters

were "hooded" and one-hour limits were imposed.

Removal of meters was recommended by a committee that included city staff and downtown merchants.

"There was a strong

Meters were hooded six months ago.

statement that meters had to go," said Jerry Hernandez, of the promotional agency Main Street Watson-



Meters will be kept in storage

Watsonville Police Chief Terry Medina says that, despite the City Council's vote Tuesday to get rid of parking meters, he isn't going to turn around and sell the meters to another city.

Medina said he plans to keep the meters in storage for 10 years or so, just in case a future City Council wants to put them back.

"By then they'll have parking meters with credit cards," observed Councilman Tony Campos.

To which the police chief replied, "Then we'll sell them as antiques and make some money."

ville.

Hernandez and Police Chief Terry Medina said removing meters will make it more convenient for downtown shoppers.

Councilman Al Alcalá, who has a downtown insurance office, asked if the one-hour limit is long enough. In reply, Hernandez said the one-hour limit is for people to use on-street parking for convenience and in-and-out trips. Those who want to stay downtown longer can park in the city lot or store-owned lots, he said.

"There's no ideal solution," said

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Hernandez.

Medina said his original estimate was that the city would lose \$75,000 by eliminating the meters. He said he now expects that figure will be lower, but couldn't give an exact figure.

Information on how much the city gets from the meters annually was not available Tuesday night.

Fines for an expired meter had been \$14. The penalty for overtime parking will be \$25.

Before the meters come out, the city will need to get the approval of a majority of downtown property owners. But that is expected to be a routine matter since merchants expect the absence of meters to result in brisker sales.