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Fentons Quest for Parking Relief

By Cathy Tyson



Photo Cathy Tyson

the city, "but is crippled by strict parking requirements." The historic area houses the former Pioneer Store and The Wayside Inn which dates back to 1898 when it was a tavern and hotel, according to the Lafayette Historical Society. At that time there wasn't even a horse parking requirement.

Fenton's bottom line - either solve the parking issues in a timely manner or they will look elsewhere. They hope to open the new location in the summer of 2012, so time is of the essence getting the recently approved parking subcommittee to come up with new historic district guidelines. Once those are in place, and building permits are approved, a significant remodel can begin.

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Calling it a "fantastic vision" and "great opportunity," all the members of the City Council were enthusiastic about Fentons Creamery possibly locating in the historic Park Theater building-but securing the project would require officially changing the parking standards around the edifice on Golden Gate Way.

"I'm in favor of ice cream," disclosed Council Member Brandt Andersson at a recent City Council meeting, "I hope we can make this work."

The Park Theater and nearby Plaza Way property owners want relief to officially lower the strict parking requirements in the area. With only twelve, that's right - just one dozen parking spaces, The Park Theater building is 54 spaces short of meeting the current city requirement, according to a letter from developer, and one of the owners of the Park Theater, Greg Woehrle. He proposed a compromise, "Unless we can come to some kind of common goal - we will never be able to bring in this iconic business."

He's been diligently negotiating with nearby parking lot owners - the "Absolutely No Theater Parking" lot directly adjacent to the Theater and the First Street Bridge Lot just down Golden Gate Way, along with the 76 Gas Station to chip away at the parking dilemma.

Michael Poy, whose father opened Squirrels Restaurant back in 1983, is considering making an investment in a remodel of the iconic eatery, but wants to clarify the parking situation first.

The four property owners on Plaza Way signed a letter asking for an official adjustment of the parking requirement - citing the unique significance and character of this block that's crucial to the image of