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City staff working up fee increase numbers

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Bakersfield City Council members got an update Wednesday on the process that will produce a new impact fee on housing development.

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Over the next two months the city and county will be working to verify that the list of projects on which the fee will be based is accurate.

Then they will estimate the costs to build those roads.

By the end of April the projected size of the fee will be calculated and the impact fee plan will come back to decision makers for debate, said city Public Works engineer Marian Shaw.

The current fee is \$7,066 on a single-family home built outside the downtown area.

Kern County raised its fee, in the metropolitan Bakersfield area, to more than \$12,000 per new home.

Representatives of the building and development industry cautioned the city against drafting a dramatic increase in the fee.

Cassie Daniel of the local homebuilders' association called on the City Council to assess the impact of increased fees on the low end of the housing market before acting to raise fees.

She argued higher fees would stifle any housing market rebound.

"Many of us believe that the low end of the housing market will lead the housing market recovery," said builder representative Dave Dmohowski.

Council members also approved the long-debated 220-acre Ten Section development south of Panama Lane near Interstate 5 on Wednesday.

Vice Mayor Harold Hanson issued a ringing endorsement of the project, despite concerns about its impact on animal habitat and the Kern Water Bank.

"Mr. Manley has jumped through every hoop possible. What has happened to private property rights?" Hanson said. "This project is legal and morally OK."

Council members, with the exception of an absent David Couch, voted unanimously to approve the project.

"This project has had considerable opposition from the California Department of Fish and Game and the Kern Water Bank Authority," Hanson said.

The concerns resulted in major concessions from the developer, Hanson said, including walls, conservation easements, an 18-acre buffer on the southeastern edge of the project and reimbursement of any habitat impacts.

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