

ACTC urges Plymouth to join regional traffic mitigation fee plan

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By Jim Reece (jreece@ledger-dispatch.com)

Charles Field, executive director of the Amador County Transportation Commission, hosted a public workshop on traffic fees for development and urged the Plymouth City Council last Thursday to join Jackson, the county and other cities in implementing the program in Plymouth.

"The bad news is, new construction developers would have to pay the fees," Field said. "The good news is, it will increase your chances of having funds for highway projects in Plymouth."

Field urged the passage of the fee, based on a countywide nexus study done by the ACTC that found the fee would be \$2,832 per single-family dwelling unit for new development.

An ordinance and resolution were also shown, along with a schedule of fee rates for other types of development.

Interim City Administrator Gene Albaugh said the council will hold a public hearing on the traffic mitigation fees at its Sept. 22 council meeting. Field will offer another presentation at that meeting.

The fee program would become effective 60 days after approval. Albaugh said last Thursday's meeting was planned as a public hearing but notice was not advertised, so the hearing was rescheduled.

Field said Plymouth and other cities in the county, plus the board of supervisors would all have representation in the traffic mitigation fee program, through having a seat on an oversight committee. He said a memorandum of understanding would be brought back to the council to arrange the committee.

In discussion, Councilwoman Patricia Fordyce said that the fee collections would stay with the city, then be paid to the county for disbursement. A 1 percent allocation would be kept by the city for administrative costs, the draft ordinance said in part. Field said the county auditor would keep the funds, paid once a year to the county, and make an annual report of the money.

Field said Plymouth could charge their own fee but they would need their own nexus study to prove what they charge. The ACTC's nexus was "\$20,000 of intense effort" in studying roads, traffic and development. The nexus allowed the county to change its fees from \$1,400 to \$4,500. Supervisors approved it but developers of the Martell Business District challenged it. The county then revised the fee to \$2,800, as supported by the nexus. He said the county fee should be raised to \$4,500 next year.

Affordable housing is the only development that would be exempt from the fee, Field said.

The per-dwelling unit fees for residential development included:

- single family, \$3,000
- multi-family attached, including apartments, duplexes or condos, \$2,130
- mobile home park, subdivision or retirement community, \$1,266
- congregate care facility, \$645

The council also voted to name a rose garden in the city after former Mayor Gene Beck, who passed away last

Saturday.

Fordyce and Eleanor Faddis said the Lodge Hill Committee wanted to be on the Sept. 22 agenda to work on a diagram and estimate for a recreation grant for the revamping of Lodge Hill.

Fordyce said that they wanted to get a preliminary drawing and then speak with City Grant Administrator Terry Cox about working on the grant. With a schematic drawing, Cox does the work, she said, adding that there is \$220,000 available for the asking.

Work would include handicap accessibility, new toilets and walls and paper dispenser fixtures.

Albaugh said the city has launched an official Web site, www.ci.plymouth.ca.us.

"It's Mayberry all over again," Albaugh said. The site shows a photo of city hall, the council and a girl scout troop and has dining information, gives driving directions, shows an aerial map of the town and has links to Amador Flower Farm, Amador Vintners and Charles Spinetta Web sites. The site also has the city's first newsletter.

It also lists information on the Third Annual Bluegrassin' In The Foothills music festival, set for Sept. 16 through 18 at the Amador County Fairgrounds in Plymouth.

Bernice Honeychurch, an Amador Master Gardener and member of the Rose Society, told the council that she and other master gardeners have a planning committee and have already worked on the garden at Sharky Begovich Park, across the street from city hall.

She said that the Amador Community Foundation has established a memorial fund for the rose garden, through which citizens may donate money in the name of a family member or for Beck. The flowers are \$15 per plant, so she suggested people might want to make donations in \$15 increments. She said about nine plants would be needed for ground cover, while they planned to use 27 shrub roses in three-bush layouts to form bigger bushes.

Honeychurch said the group must order their flowers by Oct. 5 to qualify for a discount rate from Amador Nursery.

She said the garden would have a barrier between the flowers and the children's play area.

Albaugh said that the city office had received a nice thank-you card from the Beck family for the memorial ceremony the Friday before at city hall, noting that "Gene would have been proud."

Mayor Mike O'Meara began the meeting with a moment of silence for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

O'Meara adjourned the meeting in memory of Beck.

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