

Officials consider construction fee to pay for schools

A \$1 per square foot fee could raise as much as \$200,000 for improvements to schools

By **Buffy Pollock**
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CENTRAL POINT — School District 6 officials are halfway toward imposing a new construction fee that could provide more than \$200,000 for capital improvements each year for the school district.

The fee is possible under Senate Bill 1036, which enables K-12 districts in Oregon to impose a \$1 per square foot fee on all new construction.

Central Point City Council members approved the fee last week.

Pending approval by county commissioners some time this month, District 6 Business Director Vicki Robinson said the district hopes to implement the fee by January.

"The way the process works, we need intergovernmental agreement first with entities that would collect the fee on our behalf," she said. "Then we have to develop a long-range plan for improvements we'd like to make. Then the school board would make the decision to adopt the resolution and implement the tax."

Based on a recent quarter's growth inside city limits, some \$53,046 would have been collected. Additional revenues would have come from the district's two Gold Hill schools, for which the fee would be collected by Jackson County.

While all new residential construction pays \$1 per square foot, commercial projects pay 50 cents and industrial projects are levied at 25 cents.

While a bond measure in recent years renovated a number of district schools, Robinson said the district is still in need of funding for improvements such as roof repairs and heavy-duty safety locks to enable teachers to lock doors from the inside of classrooms during emergencies.

Central Point Development Services Director Matt Samitore said council members voiced some concern about public perception of the fee being paid at City Hall.

"There were some concerns by the council, and justifiably, that when a person comes in to get a building permit, they'll see all these fees," he said. "This would show just like any other system development fee charged by the city. We have the dilemma in Central Point that when people pay for water, they also pay Medford Water Commission. When they pay sewer, they pay the sewer authority — now they'll be paying the school district, too."

Samitore said the city will put together information to explain all the fees charged on new construction.

"One thing we want to be sure (of) is that people, when they pay these fees, they have a clear understanding of where this money is going," he said. "The timing is definitely interesting on this. We've been working to reduce our SDCs and just when our fees go down we have the state implement a fee to cause overall costs of development to go back up."

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