

# Rocky Mountain News

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## Castle Rock OKs future water plan

By John Aguilar, Rocky Mountain News

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CASTLE ROCK - The Town Council unanimously approved a \$400 million long-range water plan Tuesday night, but plans to use impact fees on new homes to pay for much of it were met with howls of protest from developers.

"It's a shock to the system," said Mark Osborn, director of land acquisitions with Village Homes, which is slated to build a new development in Castle Rock.

Osborn and other homebuilders were primarily concerned about the plan's call to suddenly raise the impact fee developers must pay Castle Rock on each home they build from \$2,500 to \$10,444, starting April 1.

"It's going to affect the affordability of all the homes they're building in Castle Rock," said Ed Zebrowski, a developer with Canyon South LLC.

He said homebuyers could look to buy houses in nearby communities, like Parker and Lone Tree, instead.

But Mayor Ray Waterman responded that the town can no longer wait to implement a water strategy and that a plan to pay for it must also be put in place right away.

"I understand your short-term reality problem, but Castle Rock has a long-term reality problem," he said.

He said town leaders had already backed off from an original proposal to hike the impact fee to nearly \$15,000 per home.

Council members meet later this month to finalize impact fees on developers and rate charges to households. Residents could see their bills rise anywhere from \$4 to \$8 a month to pay for the water plan.

Castle Rock's population of 35,000 residents is expected to grow to 100,000 by 2027, and the town's reliance on rapidly disappearing groundwater could be a problem over the next few decades.

The town's new water plan aims to secure 75 percent of Castle Rock's future water supply from renewable and reusable sources.

It hopes to do so by reducing consumption in town by 18 percent per person and implementing a "water budget" program that will penalize water users who guzzle too many gallons by charging a higher rate.

Castle Rock also will conserve water by promoting the use of more efficient irrigation systems in residents' yards.

On the supply side, the town plans to tap into nearly 10,000 acre-feet of water in the Reuter- Hess reservoir, a 16,000 acre-foot storage facility being built near Parker.

An acre-foot equals 326,000 gallons, enough to serve two urban homes for one year.

The town also will look to partner with other municipalities to import water from other parts of the state through pipelines and aqueducts.

Utilities Director Ron Redd calls Castle Rock's water plan "very logical, very forward-thinking." He defended the increased impact fees and residential water rates.

"We've identified a plan, we've identified the costs and we're right there with comparable communities," Redd said.

Councilman Jack Hurd implored developers complaining about the impact fees to take a more long-term view of the situation.

"If we don't do it, your homes won't be worth anything 50 years from now," he said.

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