



[Return to article](#) | [Return to Local News](#)

## Child-care fee moves forward

Unique ordinance created to help meet city's need for more facilities

### WHAT'S NEXT

The ordinance to establish a Child-Care Facilities Impact Fee will get its second reading at the council's Oct. 13 meeting and, if passed, will go into effect 30 days later, on Nov. 12, said Sheila R. Gilligan, assistant city manager.

Gilligan also said that the second reading will not include a public hearing, but the council would likely hear public testimony if citizens wished to speak. For more information, call 346-0611

K Kaufmann  
The Desert Sun  
September 23, 2005

---

An innovative ordinance to charge commercial developers a special fee to pay for more child-care facilities in Palm Desert took a big step toward passage at Thursday's City Council meeting.

The Child-Care Facilities Impact Fee passed first reading by unanimous vote after a brief public hearing where most of the voices heard were positive.

Second reading is scheduled for Oct. 13.

"I'm thrilled," said Stella Leonard, executive director of Boehm Child Connection, a well-regarded day-care center in the city. "(Child care) is an industry that will not go away as long as there are families and young children."

The ordinance has been spurred by the increasing number of young families moving to the city and the increased demand for child care that has created.

A report released this month by the Riverside County Children & Families Commission found that in 2003 the county had the lowest proportion of licensed child-care spaces for working families of any county in California.

"No one can dispute the need," Councilwoman Jean Benson, a strong supporter of the ordinance, said.

"It's everyone's responsibility to see we have child care for working people," she said.

Under the ordinance, commercial developers would pay a fee based on the type and number of square feet in their project. Fees would range from 47 cents per square foot for light-industrial space to \$1.15 per square foot

for office buildings. For example, the fee for a light-industry project of 10,000 square feet would be \$4,700.

The funds raised will be used only to build new centers or improve existing ones. The money could not be used for subsidies to individual families.

The only opposing voice at the hearing came from Fred Bell, legislative liaison for the Building Industry Association of Southern California.

The association believes the city should "work with large companies in the community to provide child care in their facilities," he said.

That view was roundly disputed by council members who noted that the city had long sought corporate support for after-school programs, with little success.

"The private sector doesn't care," said Benson.

The city did respond to other criticisms from the association by revising the ordinance to ensure greater financial accountability.

Child-care providers receiving funds will have to sign an agreement with the city to ensure that the money is used only for building or improving facilities. And if a center were to go out of business, it would be required to pay back the money.

"We will do our best to be good stewards of that money and make it work for kids," said Mayor Buford Crites.

---

[Customer service](#) [About this site](#) [Contact us](#) [F.A.Q.](#) [Subscribe Now!](#) [Advertise](#)

CLASSIFIED PARTNERS: Jobs: [CareerBuilder.com](#) | Cars: [Cars.com](#) | Apartments: [Apartments.com](#) | Shopping: [ShopLocal.com](#)

**Copyright © 2005 The Desert Sun**

Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#), updated June 7, 2005

