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Commission to revisit road fees

NORTH PORT -- On April 25, commissioners voted 3-2 to approve new road-rehabilitation fees to return ruined city roads to their original condition as built in the 1960s.

The proposed fees would earn \$9,656,250 in total revenue toward returning North Port's ailing roadways to the way they were before large trucks trundled around the city hauling fill dirt.

However, local builders oppose the new fee, saying it is unfair for new residents and businesses to bear the brunt of North Port's roadways damaged by 40 years of use and neglect.

City Attorney Rob Robinson said that a lawsuit against the city challenging the fee is likely.

These issues will be revisited Monday during the 4 p.m. Road and Drainage portion of the City Commission meeting, when commissioners will hear the first reading of an ordinance adopting the fees.

Road fee troubles builders

On Wednesday, Commissioner Dick Lockhart confirmed several development projects have pulled out of North Port because of the recently adopted road fees.

"It was a hotel and a restaurant that, I believe, was out by the Interstate," Lockhart said. "They had already submitted plans to the city. Hopefully this won't be the tip of the iceberg, but I wouldn't be surprised if it was. We can't afford to lose these kinds of things."

Lockhart planned to attend a special North Port Contractor's Association meeting on Friday to learn more about the issue. He said the contractors "opened up the facts" of the issue to him.

"More fees to the businesses that already alleviate the residential tax burden of the city (are) wrong," Lockhart said. "We're only 28 to 30 percent built out and have a long way to go. We can't kill the goose that laid the golden egg. And we can't depend continually on new housing, because that's already slowed down."

When asked if he thought other commissioners would be willing to reconsider their approval of the road fees, Lockhart said he wasn't sure how the rest of the commission was thinking.

The fees commissioners will consider are:

* \$1.25 per square foot for a single-family home or \$3,125 per lot.

* \$1.75 per square foot for a commercial building.

City staff recommends approving the first reading and moving the ordinance to a second reading at the June 12 commission meeting.

During the regular commission meeting Monday evening, commissioners will also hear the first reading of an ordinance adopting new impact fees. Commissioners also adopted the 2006 Duncan impact fee study with the new rates at the same time they adopted the road-rehabilitation fees.

Additional city business

In other business, commissioners will:

* Accept a grant of \$80,000 from the William G. Selby and Marie Selby Foundation for the new Social Services Building.

* Discuss U.S. 41 corridor projects and funding sources.

* Discuss the possibility of appointing a nonresident representative from one of the five manufactured-home parks to the North Port Utility Advisory Board.

* Discuss the Venice Land Clearing chipper mill on Joe Jeff Street.

* Hear a proclamation for Memorial Day.

* Hear a proclamation proclaiming June 1 - 8, 2006 as "Race Unity Week."

* Honor the North Port High School Concert Band, Jazz Band, and "Alliance" Drum and Bugle Corps.

* Present certificate of appreciation plaques to Alice White and Valerie Ollinger for their dedication and commitment to holding the Annual North Port Tree Festival.

* Hear a presentation by Arthur Garafolo and Robin San Vicente promoting the cultural aspects of North Port and uniting area artisans.

* Hear a presentation by [Elaine Allen](#)-Emrich regarding the future of the Children's Community Clothing Closet, sponsored by the city and Early Bird Kiwanis.

* Consider the appointment of Jodi Fraser as a regular member to the Ad Hoc Art Committee.

* Consider the appointment of Anne Couzens as a regular member to the Code Enforcement Board.

* Consider the appointment of David Garafalo as a regular member to the Charter Review Advisory Board.


- * Consider approving a Budget Transfer in the amount of \$900 for the purchase of an additional file system and cabinet for payroll.
- * Consider approving the sale of five surplus stretchers.
- * Consider approving the March 2006 cash receipts summary.
- * Consider approving a \$44,500 budget transfer for goals, fencing and a welcome sign for the Narramore Soccer fields.
- * Consider approving a Standard Water and Wastewater developer's agreement between the city and the North Port Gateway.
- * Consider approving a request from John Rawlings, a representative of the North Port High School Athletic Booster Club, to place four informational signs in city rights of way to promote a Texas Hold 'em Tournament at the William A. Garvey VFW Post 8203 on June 17, to raise money for the North Port High School Booster Club.

The Fire Rescue and Road & Drainage district governing body meetings begin at 4 p.m., while the regular meeting begins at 6 p.m. Both meetings are held in commission chambers, 4970 City Hall Blvd. The public is welcome to attend.

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