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NORTHWEST ARKANSAS TIMES

Committee wants to reward efficiency by returning impact fees

BY KATE WARD Northwest Arkansas Times
 Posted on Wednesday, July 9, 2008

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Mayor Dan Coody's ad hoc committee wants the Fayetteville City Council to consider a study of incentives to encourage residential builders to maximize energy efficiency.

"We want you to adopt the Arkansas efficiency code and amend it to add these provisions that will make it an energy-efficient ticket. We want to present this so you know how the builder would access this project," Jeff Beaver, a committee member with Green Lighting Co., said Tuesday during the council agenda setting session.

Beaver, with the assistance of fellow committee members, showed aldermen a PowerPoint presentation explaining the implementation of the group's proposed energy rating system, which encourages building energyefficient structures via competition. As part of the unified development code, the Arkansas energy code would require builders to display a sticker on a home for sale showing the



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property's score for energy efficiency.

"The energy rating system will help builders and the public understand how the small things help their home," Beaver said.

Jason Brannen, a committee member with Arkansas Western Gas Co., requested linking the project to the city's Web site to enable public access.

"We've included all the main points into one interactive Excel spreadsheet," he said. "That way anyone can go to the Fayetteville Web site and find it. You can energy audit yourself by downloading this spreadsheet. It's a tool that's intended for new construction."

The site would enable builders to fill out a scorecard explaining what they're going to put into a house to make it energy efficient, he said. Features like solar boards and LED lights would give the house a higher score. After calculating a home's energy efficiency, participants would be able to print labels, which are then placed on a home's electrical panel by the occupancy inspector.

Though the program is voluntary, Beaver urged aldermen to consider making incentives for energyefficient building.

"We'd like the City Council to consider refunding a portion of the impact fee to builders who maximize energy efficiency," he said. "After an adequate monitoring period of continued energy efficiency, we'd like to give another portion of the impact fee to the homeowner. After monitoring reduced water usage and sewer waste rates, we'd like the city to consider listing these extraordinary homes on the city's Web site, unranked."

Brannen and other committee members have been meeting since January, when Coody decided the city needed to encourage energy-inefficient buildings. The group, which is made up of builders, developers, local utility company representatives and citizens, has been meeting twice a month with a goal of providing recommendations in the areas of education, energy code upgrades and incentives for energy-efficient construction.

John Coleman, sustainability coordinator for the city, said the Arkansas Energy Office has expressed an interest in duplicating the project in cities throughout the state.

Coody applauded the group's efforts, adding that the focus on residential construction is only the first step. Developing efficient building practices for commercial properties will likely be the next step, he said.

"I want to thank this committee. They've been working on this for

I want to thank this committee. They've been working on this for eight months," he said. "If this system is adopted, not only will the city of Fayetteville be better off but quite possibly the whole state. It's amazing how Fayetteville has made a national leadership role in doing things like this. I find it very heartwarming."

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