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## Committee named to study park impact fee

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**PORTAGE** | Mayor Doug Olson named seven residents to a parks department impact fee advisory committee.

The committee will work with consultants Lehman & Lehman Inc., of Mishawaka, to study the need of a parks impact fee, determine an impact fee zone and determine the amount of the fee.

Parks Superintendent Carl Fisher said the consultant will soon be setting a meeting with the committee. The meetings are open to the public.

Committee members are local developer and Board of Works member Mel Gore; Lori Monahan, of the Porter County Builders Association and North County Builders Council; Bill Fekete, a member of the Portage Township School Board and Portage Parks Board; A.J. Monroe, the city's director of community planning and development; local real estate agent and member of the city's Planning Commission Robin Wilkening; City Council member Liz Modesto; and Park Board member Mark Sulski.

A recreational impact fee would add a sum of money, yet to be determined, to each residential building permit issued by the city. Those funds would be placed into an escrow account and be used for parks projects to benefit new residents.

An initial study conducted by the consultants indicated that a recreation impact fee would be of "significant benefit" to the city, which is seeking a continuing increase in residential housing and population growth. The study projects more than 2,100 new homes could be constructed in the next 10 years, with the city's population climbing by about 5,000 residents during the same time period.

If an impact fee were to be established, it could not pay for present deficiencies within the park system. Those would have to be paid through alternate means by current residents. The impact

fee money would pay for new construction to meet the needs of incoming residents.

The feasibility study indicated the impact fee could be within the range of \$848 to \$2,756 per new residential use.

A further study, which will cost \$29,500, will continue the analysis of the city's park system. According to state statute, an impact fee advisory committee must be formed, along with the establishment of an impact fee zone. There will also be an infrastructure improvement plan prepared and an impact fee review board appointed before a precise impact fee can be determined. The study will also look at the current inventory and establish recreational standards within the city.

**[EXTRAS]**