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Council rushing to pass drainage impact fee

By Scott Mahon

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After more than a year of committee work, debate, consultants and feasibility studies, the New Braunfels City Council will try to “fast track” the city’s drainage ordinance regarding storm water development fees, or drainage impact fees.

Council is scheduled to meet Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday to approve the ordinance, which, like all ordinances, requires three readings.

The ordinance actually modifies a 2000 ordinance that defined utility fees that would be paid by all New Braunfels residents on a monthly basis to pay for the cost of maintaining new and existing drainage projects.

Although a drainage utility fee has never been implemented, council has debated how much the fee should be and has discussed a range of \$5 to \$7 per month.

Mayor Adam Cork said Friday that next week’s meetings would focus solely on storm water development fees, or impact fees, and that council would consider an amount for utility fees at a later date.

“The 2000 ordinance addressed utility fees, but the ordinance we will be considering Monday deals with storm water development fees only,” he said. “I’ve resisted setting an amount for the utility fee until we’ve decided on impact fees. But since we could potentially have three new council members after the May 7 election, I’d hate to see them deal with an issue as complicated as this and delay it any longer.”

Monday’s public hearing regarding impact fees will include the amount of the fees, which have been proposed to be \$750 per lot or

\$1,250 per acre for new development.

District 3 Councilwoman Gale Pospisil and District 6 Councilman Ken Valentine both said they might consider higher fees.

"I think the fee should be more like \$1,000 per lot," Valentine said.

Cork said he would also consider amending the ordinance.

"I'd like to amend the ordinance so that it says that if you're within 3,000 feet of an existing conveyance or detention pond, then you'd have to connect or pay the fee," he said. "But if you're more than 3,000 feet away from an existing conveyance or detention pond, then you'd have the option to pay the fee or build a detention pond."

As for fast-tracking the ordinance next week, both Cork and Pospisil said it was time to move forward.

"This should have been done a long time ago," Cork said.

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