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07/12/06

Phased-in impact fees pass first test

synopsis: Impact fee increase passes first reading.

NORTH PORT -- To the chagrin of some, commissioners unanimously adopted the first reading of the ordinance adopting a phased-in impact fee increase Monday.

"Why are we doing it in two stages?" asked resident John Barkenquast. "This should have been done one time. You're showing a precedent here that the builders rule our city. I'm tired of the builders. I thought citizens elected you people. And if you talked to the citizens of this city, they want the impact fees raised all at one time. You listened to the builders and that's not fair. They didn't put you in office."

Commissioner Vanessa Carusone disagreed.

"I don't believe we came to that conclusion because of the builders," she said. "Our own person who did the Duncan study (which recommended the fee increase) said that phasing in is the process for going through this. We're only looking at a more reasonable way of doing things. Implementation in one year was staff recommendation. The current fees are \$2,874. Then it will go to \$4,681. By (October) 2007, then they'll to \$6,487 for a single-family detached home."

Commission Vice Chair Barbara Gross was in favor of adopting the entire fee, but said the phasing was the best the city could do.

"I still believe we should have fully funded the impact fees," she said. "One of the reasons a lot of the people said we don't have as many houses being built. I had (City Finance Director Terri Gould) do some figuring for me. If we do 1,000 homes this next year, that's less than 100 building permits a month, we will, funding this halfway, collect approximately \$8.5 million. That means if we had fully funded it and went to 2,000 homes a year, we would have collected \$17 million."

Commissioner Fred Tower III said the city has been behind since 1999, which was the last time commissioners considered and failed to raise impact fees.

"This was a compromise," he said.


Impact fees can only be used for future impacts on the community created by future growth. This includes improvements for roads, transportation and parks.

The second reading is July 24.

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