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Corning to cut back development fee hike

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Staff Writer

CORNING New development impact fees were again a big topic of Tuesday night's Corning City Council meeting.

The good news is that after reviewing the hike, which brought the fees to \$14,000, the council has directed staff to make changes to reduce them to \$12,500.

The bad news for those developers attending the meeting is that the pain will begin immediately.

Most don't have a problem with the amount of the fees. Their problem was how the fees were collected. Several advocated a structured phasing system.

In his staff report, Corning City manager Steve Kimbrough pointed out several drawbacks to this idea, including a loss of funding at the onset.

He has proposed two scenarios, each with drawbacks.

"The five-year recovery period, starting with the traffic mitigation fee of \$1,000 and ending with a traffic mitigation of \$10,000, recovers the lost revenue in the five-year planning period," said Kimbrough. "The 10-year phasing of the fee has the adverse effect of throwing a portion of the debt over into the next five-year planning period.

The council's consensus was that neither plan was agreeable and that phasing wasn't a good idea as it was presented.

Mayor Gary Strack said he wasn't for phasing but was willing to look at the planned infrastructure and eliminate items that weren't needed.

At the June 28 meeting, the council instructed staff to increase the equivalent dwelling unit from three to five and recalculate the fee structure.

The result of the increase was a decrease in the park development fee from \$1,912 per dwelling unit to \$1,733 per unit, a reduction of \$179.

The new factor for EDUs was also applied to the proposed traffic mitigation fee and lowered the fee from \$4,972 to \$4,488, a reduction of \$516 per unit.

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Together, the changes reduced the overall dwelling unit fee by \$695 per unit. No changes or phasing are recommended for the water, sewage and drainage fee.

The council felt that five units per acre would more accurately reflect future development patterns.

A lot of those in attendance on Tuesday commented that in planning for the future, Corning may be stunting its own growth.

"If we don't do something to attract residential growth, commercial growth will never happen," said Chris Hill. "Residential growth is the first thing commercial growth looks at."

Another person pointed out that if the current fees get enacted, they will be more expensive than those in Chico.

Kimbrough said it was hard to gauge growth.

"We had years of only having near 11 new units, then last year we suddenly had 50," he said. "So we have a small sample to judge growth by," said Kimbrough. "This can be reviewed next year when we have more data."

"I understand how these fees will put a strain on our smaller developers, but we must look at the future growth that could negatively impact the city and the citizenry," said Councilwoman Toni Parkins, reading from a prepared statement. "If we do not start now by implementing the development fees. Anything less would negatively impact our town. We must, as a city, be proactive and not reactive."

However, Councilwoman Becky Hill pointed out the flip side.

"This could cause development to lower because people can't afford to build here and choose to go elsewhere," said Hill.

Councilwoman Darlene Dickison said that most of the development taking place had been previously planned but abandoned.

"A lot of our development was planned in 78, the 900 new proposed homes, then the market fell through and the plans did also," said Dickison. "What we see now are the same projects, just different developers."

Kimbrough asked the council to consider three questions:

Does the city council desire any changes in the cost of infrastructure and facilities proposed to be built under this 20-year cycle of fee programs?

The council said yes, and after discussion, decided to eliminate two proposed traffic signals, remove the funding element for a proposed community center, integrate the bedroom tax into the park fees and set the fees to be enacted "prior to occupancy."

Does the council wish to accept recomputation of commercial and industrial equivalent dwelling unit factor as suggested by those in attendance at the last meeting?

The council agreed.

Does the council wish to implement the fees with or without phasing, and what phasing plan does the council prefer?

The council rejected phasing.



"This isn't set in stone. This is a working document, and it can be reviewed every year," pointed out City Engineer Ed Anderson.

The item will be brought to council for a vote in the form of a resolution on July 19.

BACKGROUND: The Corning City Council has been studying increasing developer fees.

WHAT'S NEW: The council has decided to lower the proposed new fees from \$14,000 to \$12,500 and to have the item up for vote at the next meeting.

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