

# THE DAILY TIMES

FARMINGTON NEW MEXICO

## New homeowners to be charged water fee

By Lindsay Whitehurst The Daily Times

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FARMINGTON — More new homeowners will pay a \$900 water service fee after the City Council voted to expand water service areas this week.

"They prefer this to drilling a well or hauling water up to those locations," Community Development Director Mike Sullivan said. "Almost everyone will tell you this is cheap."

The water fee, though, is separate from the illegal park fees the city has been charging since 1977.

Last July, a developer brought up the fact that those fees were not set according to state law.

A committee was set up to revise the fees, but the new rules have missed several deadlines, the last one in January.

Revised fees won't come before the council until late March, at the earliest.

The expanded water fee, though, only applies to new homes; the five homes already there will be grandfathered in.

People living on a nine-square-mile section on the northeast side of Farmington already pay a one-time water impact fee to cover the cost of improvements.

City utilities don't stretch to the area on the northeast side, which generally is located east and west of Foothills Drive and north of Rincoñada Street.

Established in 1996, the fee ranges from \$900 to \$2,114. It's based on the cost of the improvements divided by the number of people they serve; some areas serve more people than others; in other areas the improvements were more expensive.

On Tuesday, the council voted to add another 320 acres, or one-half a square mile, to the water service area because those customers also benefit from the improvements.

"Without the (improvements) we build using the impact fee money, those areas could not be receiving water," Sullivan said. "We felt it was reasonable to include them in an impact fee since they are benefiting."

Typically, the charge will be built into the cost of a house. About half of the new area already is planned for homes in the Las Vistas and Las Colinas subdivisions.

The area originally wasn't included as part of the service area because it is below the elevation boundary line and could have been serviced by a different tank.

But as homes are built, they have been serviced by water from the water service area, Sullivan said.

Lindsay Whitehurst: [whitehurst@daily-times.com](mailto:whitehurst@daily-times.com)

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