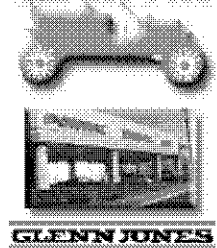




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**Council narrowly votes to keep town's no-impact-fee zones**

By MARK COWLING, Editor

February 25, 2009

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**A bare majority of Town Council members voted to continue allowing new construction in the old part of town and North Florence to be exempt from the "impact fees" charged in other parts of town.**

This was despite the fact that it was the council that asked town staff to bring the issue to them for reconsideration. On the agenda was an ordinance to assess impact fees equitably throughout the town. Voting "yes" at last week's regular meeting were Vallarie Woolridge, Barbara Brown and Tom Celaya. Voting no were Bill Hawkins, Arnie Raasch, Vice Mayor Tom Smith and Mayor Vicki Kilvinger.

The town's total impact fee on a typical single-family home is currently \$11,833. Water and sewer account for just over half the total fee. The fee is intended to help absorb new residents' "impacts" on a variety of town services including utilities, streets, libraries, parks, police, fire/EMS and public works, so that growth pays for itself.

The ordinance under consideration at last week's regular meeting would have eliminated the exempt areas, but would have allowed for proportional credits for construction on lots that had already received town services, Town Manager Himanshu Patel said.

In "call to the public," Tom Rankin told the council that the current ordinance "needs to be left alone." The majority of these areas already have town utility lines and streets, and new charges will harm the potential for development, Rankin said.

"I hope tonight you remember why we put it in. ... to put traffic downtown and have a vibrant Main Street. The economy is down. We do not need an increase in impact fees at this time."

Art Buckley of Florence Gardens said the people of Florence Gardens bonded themselves, with the help of the town's credit, and bought the sewer and water companies. "I don't see what services they're going to get that they haven't already paid for."

Aside from fairness, practicality should also be considered, Buckley said. "The money you'll get from infill lots is very small."

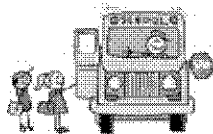
In the council's discussion, Hawkins noted the economy and said, "I don't think this is the time to be doing this. ... If the economy turns around and we get swamped, we can look at it again."

Patel again noted many places wouldn't pay the full fee. The town is required to provide proportional credit if the infrastructure is already there or if the developer is putting it in. The town core has seen a clear benefit from the

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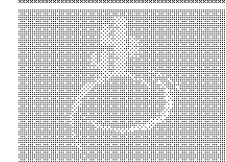
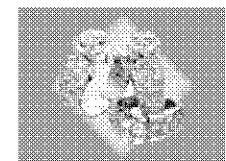
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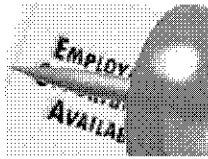
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exemption, but "the key is having it fair and equitable throughout the community," Patel said.

But Raasch said he was most concerned about seeing a new house hit with more than \$11,000 in fees "before we even start. ... I agree with Bill, I don't think the economy is right."

Patel noted the issue came up some weeks ago during discussion of the Vista Pueblo plat, which the town owns, in Florence Gardens. "They're in a no-impact-fee zone. This item was brought to you at your request."

In other business, the council approved a bid for a street sweeper to Southwest Sweeper Sales for \$142,000.

Public Works Director Wayne Costa said the sweeper is needed primarily for the Anthem area. The town's existing sweeper isn't able to make the eight-mile trip to Anthem consistently, he said. The contract to buy the sweeper "piggybacks" on a bid obtained by the City of Holbrook.

The council also approved use of town resources to further evaluate the community's interest in starting a Florence-based Boys & Girls Club.

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