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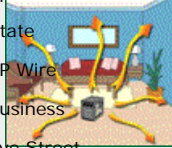


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Homebuilder concerns delay development fee vote

BY JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writer
jburger@bakersfield.com | Tuesday, Oct 28 2008 1:24 PM

Last Updated: Wednesday, Oct 29 2008 7:57 AM

Land developers are aiming to halt a small increase in the impact fees they pay in the county areas of metropolitan Bakersfield.

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The move could also freeze a larger, already-approved fee increase in incorporated Bakersfield.

On Monday, a lawyer for the Kern County Homebuilders' Association fired off an aggressive letter to the county calling the fee increase illegal.

A threat of legal action underlies the letter. So the county yanked the item off the Board of Supervisors' Tuesday meeting agenda.

Kern County Roads Commissioner Craig Pope said the letter wasn't really what prompted the delay. He said homebuilders have some questions that

the county needs to research answers for and "we want a program that is palatable to the development community."

"That's just a shotgun thing," Pope said of the letter. "They're just trying to throw mud at it and see what sticks."

The county fight is over a fee increase from \$12,958 to \$13,595 on the average new home.

Pope thinks that may be because the \$7,066 to \$12,228 per home city fee increase, approved last month, will not take effect until 60 days after the county of Kern passes its fee.

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Roger McIntosh, a civil engineer who has represented local homebuilders in duels over impact fee increases, said the city and county have not shown homebuilders proof they need to pay the suggested impact fees.

He said he was not aware that stopping the county fee would stall the city fee.

The developers already tried to stop the fee increase at the city, but succeeded only in getting it slightly reduced.

Bakersfield City Manager Alan Tandy has criticized developers for using stall tactics to delay the fee — and argued powerfully that the fee increase is needed to match \$630 million in federal funds routed to freeway building in Bakersfield by former Rep. Bill Thomas, R-Bakersfield.

Developers talked city leaders into dropping the fee from \$14,940 — the amount proposed in May — to the \$12,228 fee eventually approved in September.

In the second year the city fee will jump to \$13,595.

An estimated 35,000 homes that were approved during the housing market explosion, but were not built, could be built under a substantially smaller city of Bakersfield impact fee of around \$7,066.

The new fee, if passed, would only apply to projects in the city of Bakersfield that were approved after it was put in place.

Until the higher fee takes effect, any new developments approved by the city will pay the lower, existing fee.

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