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Impact fee issue back before Prescott council

By Cindy Barks

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PRESCOTT - A decision that the Prescott City Council pushed off in August is up for more discussion this week.

At its regular study session at 3 p.m. Tuesday, the City Council will continue its debate about water and sewer impact fees.

Throughout the spring and summer, the council considered recommendations to increase water and wastewater fees by a combined \$2,343 - or more, depending on the specifics of the building.

The fee increases would take the total city impact fees from the current level of about \$14,960 per new home to about \$17,303.

Originally, city officials planned for the council to decide the matter this past August. But at the urging of the building industry, the council agreed on Aug. 26 to allow further discussion on possible alternatives to the proposed rate hikes.

A committee consisting of Yavapai County Contractors Association Executive Director Sandy Griffis and Prescott Chamber of Commerce Executive Director David Maurer, along with resident Leslie Hoy, representing the local community, agreed to meet to discuss the matter.

City officials report that plenty of dialogue has taken place on the matter during the past two months. A city account of the communications contains 28 pages of questions and responses that occurred among the interested parties.

A Wednesday council memo notes, however: "To date, the city has not received a specific proposal from (the Contractors' Association) presenting an alternative to the study recommendations."

Even so, city officials said Thursday that they expected to receive an independent technical review from the Contractors Association on the city's earlier rate and impact fee evaluation in which consultant Economists.com recommended the impact fee increases.

City Manager Steve Norwood said he expects the City Council to decide the impact fee matter at its Oct. 28 voting session.

"I think if we go much longer (without making a decision on the Economists.com recommendations), we would have to redo the study," Norwood said.

In other action, the council will:

- Consider abandoning a segment of Garden Street and the alley west of Grove Avenue between Western Drive and Sheldon Street to Prescott College.

Norwood explained that the college has asked to buy a portion of the alley to allow for a more campus-like atmosphere in the area near its Crossroads Center.

But some nearby residents have opposed the move, he said, because it would affect their vehicular access to the alley.

- Conduct a special meeting at the start of the 3 p.m. session to accept a land donation from the Harold James Family Trust. The donation relates to the city's purchase of 80 acres of Granite Dells land from the trust.

The two parties previously agreed on a purchase price of \$4 million, Norwood said, but a subsequent appraisal of the land indicated a value of about \$4.7 million.

The council will recognize the donation of the additional \$700,000 in land value, Norwood said.

The meeting will take place at Prescott City Hall, 201 S. Cortez St.

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