

Nampa eyes hike for impact fees

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Government: Increase would aid fire protection, parks development; area developers raise concerns

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NAMPA — Nampa could raise impact fees on residential developments by almost 3 1/2 times their current rate in order to further spread the cost of growth to new construction.

The current impact fees, enacted in the fall of 2005, are \$1,277 per new single family home. That amount could go up to as much as \$4,379, according to a city consultant. But the city could also set a lower amount.

An advisory board, followed by the city council, will decide just how much of that potential increase will be enacted. The new rates would take effect about mid-June.

Inflation and the city's failure to anticipate certain infrastructure needs led to initially setting the fees too low, Nampa Finance Director Debbie Mammone said. The higher fees would take into account those additional costs, officials said.

The original fees did not include fire trucks, the recreation center and city swimming pools. Donated parkland also increased the city's park acreage, which means the fees can now be raised to maintain the new higher ratio of park acres to population.

"I think given the information we had at the time, we did the best we could" setting the fees, Mammone said.

Impact fees have become popular with existing homeowners and other landowners because they help generate money for local cities from sources other than property taxes.

But some developers and Realtors worry the increase will slow development. That's because impact fees typically raise the selling price of new homes.

"It's a huge jump," Nampa Association of Realtors president Ed Byington said. "Anyway you look at it, impact fees are an additional tax, period. So, fundamentally, I oppose it."

The city will collect the fees to pay for police, fire, parks and street services needed to keep up with growth. Byington asked city representatives Friday at an impact fee public meeting why the city is raising the fees so much after such a short time.

The Nampa Fire Department could be getting the largest increase for impact fees, from \$150 to \$668 for a single-family home. Over the long term, those fees would fund \$7.3 million for four new fire stations and five new firefighting vehicles. Total money for the fire department capital improvements is \$9.2 million.

The \$17 million for parks from impact fees would ultimately go toward a \$67 million plan for five new neighborhood parks, two new large urban parks and two new community parks.

City consultant Tom Pippen, of BBC Research & Consulting in Denver, said he has seen few cases in which impact fees slowed growth in a community. But Byington said he thinks Nampa's new impact fees that started in 2005 did just that.

What's next?

A public meeting to discuss Nampa's proposed new impact fees will be held from 4 to 6 p.m. Tuesday at Nampa City Hall, 411 3rd St. S.

The Nampa Planning and Zoning Commission will address the new impact fees in its regular city hall meeting on Tuesday, March 27, at 6:30 p.m.

Maximum fee increase

Dept. Current fee Maximum per new home proposed fee

Police \$84 \$296

Fire \$150 \$668

Parks \$674 \$2,407

Streets \$369 \$1,008

Total \$1,277 \$4,379

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