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Planning commissioners briefed on ways to share costs of growth

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by ALAN CHOATE

SEQUIM -- A system of impact fees or local improvement districts could bring some sanity to the way the costs of growth are shared among developers, new residents and the public, the Sequim Planning Commission was told Tuesday.

City Attorney Craig Ritchie went through several funding options with the commission, which has been asked by the City Council to explore ways to raise money for things like roads and parks that are stressed as more people move to the area.

State law provides mechanisms to do that, Ritchie said, and the idea is straightforward -- if a development creates infrastructure needs, then that development should bear the costs. Putting that principle into action, however, can be tricky.

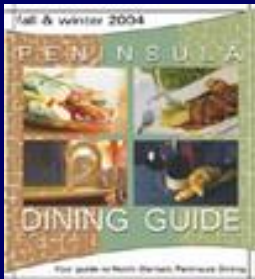
"The concept is simple, but the application has proved difficult for courts," Ritchie said.

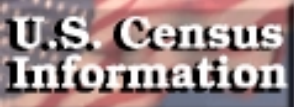
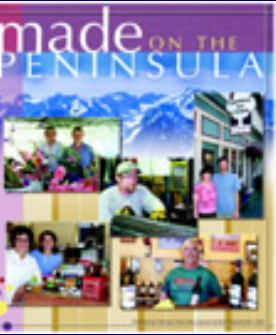
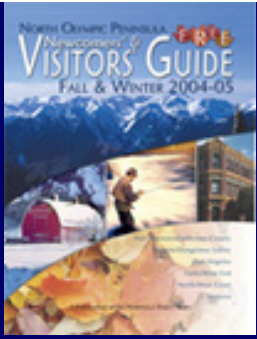
Discussion has focused on impact fees, which are assessed at the beginning of a project, and local improvement districts, or LIDs, which are taxing entities that can impose a levy for specific projects. Tuesday's meeting was discussion only; commissioners took no action.

Creating structure

Putting a funding structure into city regulations would be better than the project-by-project assessment of growth costs currently used, Ritchie said.

Now, when a developer brings a project to the city, officials present an estimate of what the impact fee will be and the two parties haggle about it. If the negotiations go nowhere, the city can require an environmental-impact study, a potentially expensive and time-consuming examination of those costs.







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