

Plumas County News



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Supervisors want to suspend impact fees 6/17

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 Staff Writer

County supervisors enacted what veteran Supervisor Ole Olsen referred to as a stimulus package at their most recent meeting when they proclaimed their intention to suspend development impact fees effective that same day, Tuesday, June 9. Olsen had voted against the fee when the board originally approved it.

Technically the supervisors did not have a resolution in front of them and so scheduled one for Tuesday, July 7. In the meantime, the supervisors motioned their intent to retroactively apply the suspension to June 9.

The action is an attempt to encourage any citizens who are considering a building project to move forward immediately, rather than waiting a month for the board's next meeting.

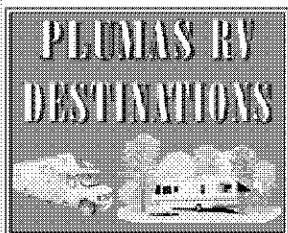
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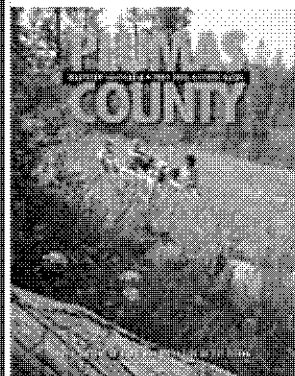


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The fees amount to \$1,392 per dwelling unit, \$193 per 1,000 square feet for commercial space and \$82 per 1,000 square feet for industrial.

Olsen brought the topic to the board, asking County Administrative Officer Jack Ingstad to give the supervisors a quick history lesson.

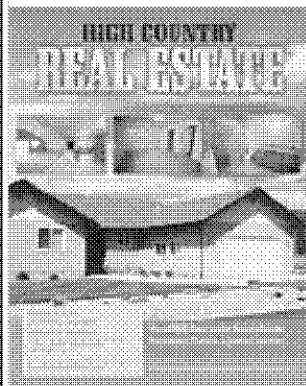
The CAO said the idea of suspending the fee had been circulating for a while and was brought up in the building department three months before. Explaining the original intent of the fee he said, "The basic idea, the policy behind the fee, is that development should pay for the impacts it has on the county government, services and buildings."

He went on to explain the county imposed the fees in 2007 after hiring a consultant to do a study on development in the county.

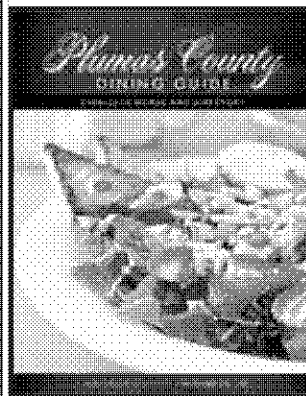
Ingstad added that none of the \$220,000 in revenue garnered since 2007 has been spent because law dictated that it be used in ways that compensated for the impacts of new development. Because development didn't keep up with the consultant's projections and county government shrank over the last four years, Ingstad said it made it more difficult to find places where the county could legally spend the funds.

The CAO mentioned County Counsel James Reichle was currently looking into the law and searching

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for places where the county could use the funds.

Ingstad went on to comment that the money couldn't be used for replacements or repairs, but could be used to expand or improve services in places where new development was creating additional pressure. As an example, in other counties a swimming pool would be expanded or improved if it was impacted by a larger number of users.

Reichle said the money couldn't be used for salaries or operations either, advising that whether or not the funds were applicable to a cause could only really be determined by looking at individual projects, since the rules were so complex and restrictive.

When it came to altering the county's stance on the fees, Reichle suggested suspending the fees was easy, while raising them to a higher level would require an update to the original study.

He added that supervisors should revisit the issue every six months, if they decide to suspend the fees because of the economic situation, so that they could receive updates from staff on changing conditions.

The attorney explained that would demonstrate the board was not using a temporary suspension of fees as a means of eliminating them forever without going through the necessary steps.

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He also cautioned that eliminating the fee completely and then trying to reinstate it later would require the county to pay for a consultant to do the initial study all over again.

Supervisor Robert Meacher said he thought the consultants who did the original study did a poor job and wasted the county's money. He said the board at the time was expecting a huge amount of growth in second homes and wanted to institute a sliding scale fee that would charge people building massive vacation homes more than average working people.

The supervisor complained the sliding scale is now common in other areas, but the consultants advised against it at the time.

Meacher said he was OK with the suspension for now, but would want to talk about reinstating the fee on a sliding scale in the long run.

Reichle advised that reinstatement on a sliding scale would require an update to the original study.

Building Department Director John Cunningham and Planning Director Randy Wilson both voiced their support for the fee suspension, given the current economic conditions.

The board unanimously approved a minute order instructing staff to bring a resolution to the July 7

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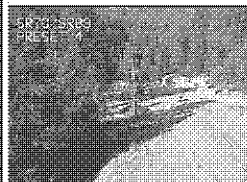
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Quincy**
69.4°F
WNW 0.0 mph

Portola
66.8°F
WSW 0.0 mph

meeting that would suspend the fees effective retroactively to June 9. The board also unanimously moved to voice their intention to approve the resolution July 7.


Ingstad added he and Reichle were investigating ways to spend the money the county had already attained from the fees. The county has been holding the funds for the next county building; Ingstad added he was hoping the money could be spent to help build a new county jail.

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52.8°F
SSW 0.0 mph
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58.8°F
SW 0.0 mph
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