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Sycamore City Council votes against reducing impact fees

By CAITLIN MULLEN cmullen@daily-chronicle.com

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SYCAMORE – A split Sycamore City Council voted against temporarily reducing impact fees for Sycamore's school and park districts.

The council voted 3-3 Tuesday on a resolution that would have allowed City Manager Bill Nicklas to administratively reduce school and park district impact fees before the housing construction season comes to an end. Mayor Ken Mundy, 1st Ward Alderman Rich Neubauer and 4th Ward Alderwoman Janice Tripp were not present at the meeting.



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The council recently was presented with a request from Shodeen Corporation to lower impact fees for a period of time to see if doing so would encourage area home sales. Nicklas discussed the issue with David Peek, executive director of the Sycamore Park District, and Wayne Riesen, superintendent of Sycamore School District 427, who then brought it to their respective boards, which suggested 42 percent and 18 percent reductions.

Ted Strack, president of the park district board, said the park district wants its impact fee to be in line with the value of an acre that can be developed.

"What prompted this has nothing to do with Mr. Shodeen's request, absolutely nothing to do with his request," Strack said. "... I think you need to have a fee that is appropriate. The fee that we have is a mathematical equation. If you define the variables, the impact fee defines itself..."

In the past, impact fees have gone up as the value of land has gone up, Strack said. Now, the value of land has gone down, so the park district board believes the fees should decrease.

Third Ward Alderman Greg Taylor asked Strack if that meant that the fees could change again in a year if land values

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"Very honestly, if I'm a builder, I'm contemplating a (law)suit, because the impact through the park district is 40 percent higher than what the equation says it should be," Strack said. "You don't have to do it. It's your choice. But we're just trying to be consistent in terms of our approach to this. It's just an equation..."

Second Ward Alderman Chuck Stowe suggested the park board consider assessing the value of land over several years instead of each year, to keep things more stable.

Fourth Ward Alderwoman Terry Kessler proposed postponing the discussion until more council members were present. She added that the council takes it direction from the school and park boards, because its their money that's being discussed.

"... We're not here to tell them they're right or wrong. We're here to acknowledge their decision," 2nd Ward Alderman Pete Paulsen said.

Third Ward Alderman Steve Braser disagreed with the proposal.

"I don't think we're sitting out there with seven to 10 building permits that are going to happen just because of this. I think we're setting a poor precedence that we're moving on one person's, one developer's request," Braser said.

Kessler, Braser and 1st Ward Alderman Alan Bauer voted against the resolution. With the split decision, Nicklas said a council member who voted against the resolution has the option to bring it back at the next meeting.

"... Maybe we look at this over a two or three year period and try to take some of the peaks and valleys out of it and look at it that way," Peek said after the meeting. "But they have to be accurate to the point of fitting in with the formula. If they're too high, the builders are going to have a problem with it, and if they're too low, then the community's going to have a problem with it."

The council also approved an ordinance setting permit parking from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday for residents of the 100 block of West Exchange Street and 200 and 300 blocks of North Maple Street. Nicklas said the ordinance came after residents of the area brought up street parking concerns in light of the DeKalb County Courthouse expansion to the north.

Sycamore Police Chief Don Thomas said two permits per household will be available; permits will have sequential numbers and corresponding addresses to prevent their sale to people other than residents.

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woody313 wrote on **September 8, 2010 12:40 p.m.** ...

Again, thanks for the no vote. Why are we giving breaks to anyone? What break do we get? (people that are already here) I pay my taxes. What about people that are trying to sell homes that are already here? Do they get a break? Why would I buy their "used" home if we allowed new homes "developers" to save on costs? I'm all for helping the (local) contractors hire people but this isn't the way to promote that. The developer is the one to benefit the most. Who is to say he will hire ANYONE local?

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