

## Mountain View council members split over contentious talk over affordable housing funds

By Kristen Marschall  
Daily News Staff Writer

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According to the agenda for Tuesday night, the Mountain View City Council was to consider a levying a fee on apartment developers for affordable housing funds.

Instead, the study session went on for an extra hour, four council members voted to scrap the fee, and talk of a possible parcel tax gained momentum.

The city is being forced to reconsider how it provides below-market-rate housing after a 2009 Los Angeles lawsuit known as the Palmer case impacted how cities enforce such programs. A state appellate court ruled that Los Angeles could not force developers to set aside affordable rental housing.

Mountain View's proposed affordable rental housing impact fee -- which went before the council three times previously -- would have apartment developers pay the city 3 percent of the appraised value for each apartment unit. The money would go into the city's affordable housing funds to create new housing developments for those who need it, said neighborhood services manager Linda Lauzze before the meeting Tuesday.

Between 2010 and 2011, 290 affordable units have been completed or will be completed in Mountain View, according to a city staff report.

"I think it's time to do something different," said Mountain View resident Frank Kalcic, one of about 10 people at the meeting who voiced their opposition to the impact fee. "(The city needs) a steady income stream and use of vouchers, so it can get that money out and help as many people

as possible."

Another resident at the podium turned to the audience and asked how many would support a parcel tax. About a dozen people -- half of the attendees -- raised their hands.

Council members Mike Kasperzak and Ronit Bryant instantly supported the impact fee, arguing that it should be higher than 3 percent. Council Member Laura Macias also backed the fee.

The parcel tax intrigued council members Margaret Abe-Koga and John Inks, who said the public should be given the opportunity to vote whether to contribute to affordable housing. And Mayor Jac Siegel, to the frustration of some council members, came out as the biggest supporter of the tax.

"I'll spend a whole year or whatever we need to working on it," he said, suggesting that residents perhaps pay \$60 a year. "I think we have a very good chance of passing it."

Council Member Tom Means said he did not like either the fee or the parcel tax.

Kasperzak, Bryant and Macias pleaded to the other council members -- Abe-Koga and Siegel in particular -- to change their minds, saying the city needed the funds from upcoming projects and the rules could be temporary. They remained opposed.

In the end, the council took two votes. Four of the seven council members voted to conduct a poll on a parcel tax, with Bryant, Kasperzak and Macias d

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issenting. The second vote -- holding a future public hearing on the impact fee -- died on a 4-3 split, with Bryant, Kasperzak and Macias favoring the hearing.

The council's decision was exactly what Joshua Howard, executive director of the Tri-County Division office of the California Apartment Association, was hoping for.

"We would like the city to look at long-term, sustainable funding," Howard told the The Daily News before the meeting. He recommended the city look at sales taxes or parcel taxes — "ongoing funds instead of being dependent on building permits."

"(In finding) affordable housing in a post-Palmer world, you're going to see cities with a number of different and creative ideas," Howard said. "There are many cities that are still trying to figure out what to do."

Email Kristen Marschall at [kmarschall@dailynewsgroup.com](mailto:kmarschall@dailynewsgroup.com).



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