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News

Boerne considers valet parking ordinance

By Dave Pasley - Staff Writer

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The Boerne City Council will be considering optional valet parking for Boerne business owners and increased impact fees for developers in the next few months. Both matters were discussed in a workshop session prior to Tuesday's regular meeting.

While there was a general consensus among council members to move forward with both items there was some uncertainty, and possibly a lack of consensus, about the details.

Councilmen Bob Manning and Ron Warden questioned the need for the separate ordinance regulating valet parking that was proposed by Planning and Community Development Director Chris Turk.

Councilmen Jacques DuBose and Jeff Haberstroh seemed more supportive of the proposed ordinance, but they raised concerns that Turk's companion suggestion allowing businesses with valet parking to reduce required on-site parking went too far. Turk proposed allowing a 40 percent reduction in on-site parking if a business offered a valet parking service.

Turk first suggested the valet parking option in a package of zoning code amendments that council members considered and approved last month. However, DuBose expressed concern about the lack of details and the valet parking option was pulled.

At the workshop Tuesday, Turk said DuBose's concerns were well-founded. He said further research had found that many cities that allow on-site parking reductions in lieu of valet parking have a companion ordinance that sets out requirements.

Turk said those requirements include licensing and insurance for the valet drivers as well as city oversight of contractual parking arrangements between private property owners. Turk said city oversight of the contractual arrangements is intended to ensure that the valet parking for one business does not inadvertently result in a problematic reduction in available parking at another business.

Warden said he was concerned about the city's involvement.

"Why should the city be involved in a contract between private entities?" Warden asked.

Manning wasn't sure the city needed to be involved in regulating any aspect of valet parking.

"I'm struggling to understand what the concern is," Manning said.

Turk said his proposal was prompted by an inquiry from a business that wanted to use valet parking to help meet parking requirements.

When the discussion concluded, Mayor Dan Heckler wrapped up with direction to Turk to incorporate the comments and concerns of council members and bring a valet parking ordinance and an amendment to the parking regulations in the zoning code to the city council for consideration at a future council meeting.

After discussing impact fees in the workshop, council members voted 5-0 during Tuesday's regular meeting to hold a public hearing on May 26 on a proposal to increase the fees by nearly 25 percent.

Economist Grady Reed from the consulting firm HDR recommended increasing the combined impact fees for water and wastewater services from \$5,690 per living unit equivalent to \$7,100 per LUE. He said the recommended fee was the maximum allowed by state law.

Reed displayed a graphic comparing Boerne's impact fees with seven other cities, most of them in high-growth areas around Austin. Only Round Rock north of Austin has a current impact fee higher than Boerne's current fee and none of the cities in the comparison has a fee higher than the fee HDR is recommending.

"This doesn't imply that Boerne will have the highest fees in the state," Reed said. "I'm confident there are other cities with higher fees."

Reed also noted that, even if the council adopts the maximum impact fee allowed, it will not cover 100 percent of the cost of extending utility services to new development.

Reed said impact fees are designed to recoup from developers some of the city's investment in utility infrastructure and the process for doing so is set by state law.

The fees apply only to new development and can recoup only the future capital cost of new infrastructure improvements. Neither investments the city has made in capacity improvements in past years nor maintenance costs can be recouped through impact fees.

Council members appeared comfortable with Reed's recommendations. However Manning questioned the methodology that was used to calculate a reduced impact fee for the Esperanza development.

Public Works Director Michael Mann said that Esperanza developer Marlin Atlantis had, in effect, pre-paid a portion of its impact fees through a development agreement with the city.

Following a public hearing on May 26 the council will consider on first reading an ordinance establishing the new impact fees and they could go into effect after the final reading of the ordinance in June.

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