

City Council approves park tax

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The Port Orchard City Council Tuesday approved the collection of a one time tax on new home construction to help pay for city parks.

The council approved a “park impact fee” by a 7-0 vote during their regularly scheduled meeting.

The city will levy the fee on all new residential homes built, costing new homeowners \$811 per single family residence and \$584 per multifamily residence. The tax will be collected at the time of building permit application.

The new tax was included in the update to the City of Port Orchard Comprehensive Parks Plan that was approved by the council in February.

Any new homes built in McCormick Woods would be exempt from the tax because Kitsap County payed the city approximately \$650,000 from their own park funds at the time of that development's annexation by Port Orchard.

That money was set aside for park growth, specifically McCormick Village park development, said Tom Bonsell, Port Orchard's Associate Planner.

The city's planning director, James Weaver, said the fees will help cover costs to operate city parks and programs as the population grows. The park tax will allow the city to build more parks and maintain current ones.

Weaver said other cities in Kitsap County collect park impact fees, and that Port Orchard's fee was less than other areas around.

Before voting, the council opened the meeting to a public hearing on the fee. No residents spoke up at the meeting.

Council member Jim Colebank expressed hesitation in voting to approve the fee. He said he recognized the importance of funding parks, but that it was hard to impose any sort of new tax. he then voted to approve it.

“Every once and a while a vote comes up that puts you in a bind,” he said. “That \$811 might not seem like much, but that could be enough to tip over a first time homebuyer.”

Council member Cindy Lucarelli said imposing the fee was necessary to keep up with the effects of the recent annexations and with general city growth.

“What I see in future development is yards getting smaller and smaller,” she said. “Parks will serve an even greater purpose in the future.”

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