

City delays action on emergency fee

By **Brian D. Bridgeford** / News Republic | Posted: Tuesday, July 13, 2010 10:54 pm

The Baraboo City Council delayed action Tuesday on a \$2,630 emergency services impact fee to allow two weeks for written public comment on the proposal.

During the regular council meeting City Administrator Edward Geick reminded the alderpersons the city has a plan for eventually building a new police, fire and ambulance station.

State law allows communities to charge a one-time impact fee for "brand new" residential building construction if it can be shown new development is putting additional demands on emergency services, he said. The city had its financial consultants, Ehlers and Associates, conduct a public facilities needs study and it supported the city's need for the emergency services impact fee.

Geick noted the city already has impact fees to support the Parks and Recreation Department and the Baraboo Public Library.

The proposed ordinance sets the fees at - \$965 for a police impact fee; \$870 for a fire department impact fee; and \$795 to support the Baraboo District Ambulance Service. Developers of new residential property are required to pay the fee when they apply for their building permit, the ordinance states.

City rules governing use of all funds raised by impact fees require they be reserved for capital projects serving the purpose for which they were collected

Although there was time set aside for a public hearing on the impact fee proposal, no citizens showed to comment on the issue.

However, Baraboo District Ambulance Service Director Dana Sechler reported on the progress BDAS has made since he was hired to replace the late Terry Wise. He spoke of their plans for the future and said the ambulance building is too small for the work they do and lacks enough garages to house their ambulances and paramedic response vehicles.

"Our highest priority is a new building," he said. "Now, we don't have enough desks for the administrative staff.

"Given the staffing that we have, especially on the weekends, we don't have enough beds." Sechler said.

Alderman Tom Kolb asked whether the city has spoken to the towns and villages that partner in local fire and ambulance services about passing their own impact fees to support the police/fire/ambulance station.

Because of the legal arrangements under which the communities are partners, only the village of West Baraboo is likely to implement its own impact fees, Geick said.

"Because of the expense involved in doing the (facilities needs) study, it's probably cost prohibitive for most of the townships," Mayor Patrick Liston said.

The agenda called for the council to do the first of two votes on the ordinance Tuesday night. However, Alderman Brett Topham objected, noting citizens still have two weeks to send in written comments about the proposal.

Alderman Gene Robkin agreed they should delay the vote until after the public comment period. "People do want to think that things they say actually has a chance of affecting the outcome," he said.

A motion to delay the first impact fee vote won approval with only Alderman Dennis Thurow voting in opposition.

Liston said residents may submit written comments on the impact fee issue until the next council meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday, July 27.

In other business:

- The council unanimously approved the hiring of Mindoro resident Wade D. Peterson as Baraboo's next utility superintendent. He is slated to begin working Monday beside veteran Utility Superintendent Terry Kramer, who retires Sept. 17.

The text of the impact fee ordinance may be read by going to the "Agendas & Minutes" section of the city Web site and downloading the agenda packet for Tuesday's meeting — <http://www.cityofbaraboo.com>.

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