

City gives initial OK to nixing impact fees

BY KEVIN DUGGAN • KevinDuggan@coloradoan.com • June 7, 2010

New housing in Fort Collins no longer will help pay for new libraries.

The Fort Collins City Council last week gave initial approval to a pair of ordinances that would do away with impact fees charged on new residential development to support the expansion of the local library system.

Mayor pro tem Kelly Ohlson said he believes in charging impact fees, but said it would be "goofy" for Fort Collins to charge fees to support the library district and other regional efforts if other entities aren't willing to do the same.

Some local governments appear reluctant to "walk the talk" of regionalism, he said.

"It's unfortunate," he said. "Impact fees, when used appropriately, are a very good tool to fund growing areas and infrastructure, but we shouldn't be the only player."

The city has charged a library expansion fee since 1996 at an average cost of \$400 per house. Expansion fees paid for the construction of the \$6 million Council Tree Library that opened in 2009.

The library was a city service until voters approved the formation of the Poudre River Public Library District in 2006.

The district, which covers about the same area as Poudre School District, is funded by a 3-mill property tax. The district does not cover Wellington or Red Feather Lakes, which have their own library systems.

The city continued collecting expansion fees and turned them over to the district until the warrantee period for the Council Tree Library building ended. In an interview, library district executive director Holly Carroll said the council's decision was "not surprising."

An intergovernmental agreement between the

district, the city and Larimer County includes a requirement that the city and county consider development impact fees for library services.

In March, the county commissioners said they were not interested in imposing an impact fee on residential development.

Timnath officials said they did not want to renegotiate its impact fees with local developers to include one for library service expansion, Carroll said.

Carroll said the district is "very appreciative" of the city collecting the fee for as long as it did.

Without the revenue from the fee, expanding library facilities within the city's growth area will be slowed down, she said.

"We're not thinking about building anything in the near future, but it would have helped," she said.

The district has about \$1 million in impact fees collected by Fort Collins remaining in its capital expansion fund that will be used to remodel the Main Library at 201 Peterson St.

A future library would likely be built in the northeast part of town to accommodate growth in the Mountain Vista area and Timnath, Carroll said.

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Greg Winn of Fort Collins reads to his daughter, Anna Winn, during the grand opening of the Council Tree Library in Fort Collins on March 28, 2009. The city has given initial approval to do away with the current library expansion fee, which helped fund the building of the Council Tree Library. (Coloradoan library)

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