

POULSBO — To keep up with its population growth projections, the Poulsbo City Council adjusted impact fee ordinances to offset the cost of park maintenance and transportation development.

On Wednesday, the council voted to increase impact fees for residential and commercial developers to fund future park maintenance and mitigation of traffic impacts. Residents will not see an increase in taxes or user fees.

The new fees go into effect Oct. 26.

Impact fees are designed to cover the cost of increased demand for services resulting from new development. The city's population is expected to grow from 9,200 in 2010 to 14,808 in 2025, according to documents in the city parks department.

Previously, the city collected traffic and park impact fees under the State Environmental Policy Act, or SEPA. The council adjusted the ordinances to reflect the move to Growth Management Act standards. The city set benchmarks for 2025 to account for population increases which will require an additional 37.18 acres of parks (bringing the total to 80.75 acres in the city park system), and necessitating more than 30 roadway, intersection and frontage improvements.

Park impact fees will increase from \$500 to \$1,195, and transportation impact fees will decrease from costly individual estimates to \$283.50 for each daily vehicle trip generated by the development.

The city is splitting the cost of impact fees for parks and traffic with developers. Additional park space by 2025 is estimated to cost \$5.55 million.

The city finances its share with taxes and user fees, which will not increase, as well as the department's funding and grants, according to Parks and Recreation Director Mary McCluskey. However, with the budget stretched thin already, "it's going to take some creative financing," she added.

Residential developers will be charged \$1,195 per residential unit. The city projects 2,092 new housing units will be needed by 2025 to accommodate the estimated growth in population. The council will review the fee after two years to adjust for changing land values.

Future commercial development is expected to result in \$20.2 million in transportation improvements. The city will finance its share of \$10 million with grants, the engineering fund and property taxes.

Commercial developers previously were charged \$5,000 to cover the cost of city staff to estimate what the project's traffic impact would be, and then charged an average impact fee of \$296 per daily trip, or \$2,950 per single-family unit. The city calculates an "average daily trip" to be the number of vehicles entering or leaving a site during a 24-hour weekday period.

Andrzej Kasiniak, assistant director of public works, said the change to change to \$283.50 daily vehicle trip benefits developers and city staff. By averaging the daily trip for all developers, it costs the city less to run the estimate and as well as the developer. Public Works is also able to use the collected impact fees on any project in a more flexible manner.

"We'll be able to respond to additional improvements in a much more timely manner," he said.

Developers will no longer be required to finance the fees up front, instead paying the fees over time or passing the cost of the fees onto the purchasers of the developed property.

Molly Lee owns property on Cedar Lane, outside the city limits between Viking Way and Highway 3. She testified

before the council against setting money aside for a proposed road and traffic signal in an area not within the city limits.

“Why micromanage money for that spot when there’s the possibility the majority of people [in the area] might not want to be incorporated into the city,” she said. “Why not use the money in [already incorporated] areas?”

Lee said she does not want her property annexed into the city.

Jan Wold, who also lives just outside the city limits, said the city was including school playgrounds and tidelands within parks that are “underwater most of the time” in its parks calculation.

“They’re increasing [park impact fees], but they’re not collecting enough to cover the actual cost of the equivalent parks and recreation facilities that citizens presently have,” Wold said.

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