



Maple Valley may change fire impact fees process

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Maple Valley City Council is considering a fire impact fee on new developments to replace the current process, which city and fire district officials consider to be inefficient.

The ordinance would also create an interlocal agreement between the city and [Maple Valley Fire and Life Safety](#) in which the city would collect the fees for the fire department. If approved, the impact fee would affect any new development applications that are submitted.

Community Development Director Ty Peterson stated in a telephone interview that there would be a baseline fee which can be reduced through various credits and reductions.

For example, an impact fee for a single family home would be \$1,593.34. But various residential fee reduction factors, such as where the residence is located at, fire service response time and the material used in construction, can bring it down. Having a sprinkler system installed in a home could bring it down by 30 percent.

"It's unlikely that any house will pay a full amount," Peterson said. "Every house will almost have a credit apply."

According to Peterson, when the Growth Management Act was first passed, it did not allow fire districts to collect impact fees. The state Legislature amended the GMA in 2007 to allow cities to collect the fee for the fire district, with some restrictions. They are only allowed to collect fees for new growth and they have to define their level of service, according to Peterson.

Peterson said that prior fire districts collected fees through the [State and Environmental Policy Act](#) (SEPA), which allowed cities to impose fees on developments that impact the environment. This mitigation process, Peterson stated, was not practical or efficient.

"It's case by case," he said. "It's not very transparent, it's not very predictable."

Scott Webster, fire marshal for Maple Valley Fire, stated in a telephone interview the proposed fire impact fee would be easier for the fire district compared to the SEPA process, which he said is too uncertain.

"The SEPA process, it's our opinion versus the developer's opinion," Webster said. "And it would go to a hearing examiner and the hearing examiner would determine if it was applicable or not based on both sides."

As the ordinance is currently written, impact fees collected for the fire district can only be spent on capital programs such as station construction or engine purchases.

The city currently has a traffic impact fee and a school impact fee.

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