



Print Page

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Sherwood City Council tables impact fee proposal

By Greg Rayburn/Staff Writer

The Sherwood City Council voted 6-2 Monday to table “indefinitely” a proposal to enact impact fees.

Alderman Tim McMinn made the motion and Alderman Charles Harmon seconded it.

Besides McMinn and Harmon, the motion was supported by Aldermen Kenneth Keplinger, Toni Butler, Marina Brooks and Steve Fender. Aldermen Kevin Lilly and Mary Jo Heye voted against it.

The tabled ordinance dealt with “road and park” impact fees on new construction to help pay for park and street improvements to accommodate Sherwood’s growing population, officials said.

One week ago, the city held two public hearings to give people an opportunity to hear from the author of a study about possibly enacting impact fees here. Another hearing was held to give people a chance to comment on the proposal.

In mid-2011, the council appropriated about \$31,000 to pay Texas consultant Duncan & Associates to compile an impact fee study. The study was completed in September.

McMinn said he opposed impact fees in Sherwood because of the sluggish condition of the economy.

“If you look at the number of commercial and housing building permits that were issued last year in comparison to earlier years, there were less permits issued,” he McMinn. “This is not the time for Sherwood to be discussing adding another tax.”

He said passing impact fees now would make Sherwood the only city in the area with such fees and put the city at a disadvantage to other municipalities in trying to attract more development.

McMinn said his motion to “table this indefinitely” does allow for the council to bring up the issue again at a future date if aldermen desire.

Brooks said she was not ready to vote on the issue Monday because “there were questions that needed to be answered.”

Keplinger said the current state of the economy is too fragile for the city to enact a new fee.

“It can be brought up at a future date,” Keplinger said.

Keplinger said bringing the issue back up would require five council members’ support.

“The motion was to table discussion,” Lilly said. “I felt the issue was worthy of debate. There are pros and cons to impact fees and I felt we should have had an open discussion.”

Heye said the city had paid money to compile a study and the issue should have had debate in the council. She said the study showed that impact fees would be a benefit to a community like Sherwood and that should have been discussed.

Mayor Virginia Hillman said she supported the vote of the council because the negative effects of impact fees would have outweighed any positive effects. She added that such a fee would be a tax that would have been regressive to the city’s growth.