

Washougal council approves impact fee deferral

Three-year pilot aimed at spurring development

By Marissa Harshman

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Washougal city officials have a plan they hope will help boost development: defer payment of most impact fees until closer to when the impact actually occurs.

The city is launching a pilot program this month that will give developers and builders the option to defer fire, transportation and park impact fee payments for as long as one year. The three-year pilot program will apply to residential, commercial and industrial construction but will not change the amount owed. The Washougal City Council unanimously approved the program at its meeting last week; Councilman Michael Delavar was absent.

“It’s one of the tools we’re putting in our toolbox for economic development,” said Joanne Boys, Washougal community development director.

Currently, the city’s municipal code requires all impact fees be paid at the time the building permit is issued. The pilot program will allow fees to be deferred until one of three events occurs: the city is called for a wallboard inspection for a residential development or certificate of occupancy inspection for commercial or industrial development; the property owner sells or transfers the title to the property; or 12 months passes from the date the deferral agreement is signed.

“We’re hoping that the benefit will be new development in Washougal, particularly commercial,” Boys said jobs and residential because rooftops come first and that brings in the commercial.”

Mayor Sean Guard said the program is just one way the city is trying to attract businesses to the area.

“I want to do everything we can to make East Clark County, and in my case specifically, Washougal, the fr

Guard said he doesn’t see any pitfalls to the program because it’s not changing the fee amounts, just whe only concern is making sure the city receives those payments.

The city has taken steps to try to ensure the fees are paid, even if a project flops. The property owner and city will place a lien on the property for the amount of the deferred fees until it receives payment. The agre when the document is signed. The owner must also pay \$300 to the city for recording and lien fees.

School impact fees will still be paid when building permits are issued. City officials asked administrators at districts if they wanted school impact fees included in the pilot program; both districts asked that the fees b about enforcement challenges and the burden to the districts, which rely on the fees to pay for facilities to

The fee deferral idea isn’t unique to Washougal. The city of La Center has a similar program in place for r park and traffic impact fees and sewer connection fees. Ridgefield city officials are discussing such a prog



After three years, Washougal city officials will determine whether to continue the program or revert to colle issued. The city will compare one-time sales tax construction revenue received at the end of each year du construction sales tax revenue.

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