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Bellevue adjusts its policy on impact-fee calculations

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BELLEVUE - During its two most recent meetings, the City Commission adjusted policy on impact-fee calculations, lessened gardening restrictions and said their effort to attract new business is now visible, with city signage.

In adjusting the policy on impact-fee calculations, the city will continue figuring usage on square footage for initial billing, but the new policy allows individuals to request the Public Works Department to monitor usage and bill accordingly.

"Basically, if you had a building that could house 500 people based on square footage, but you only regularly house 50, you can come in and ask us to bill you on usage instead," Commissioner Michael Goldman said.

Citizens interested in making use of the new calculation have to request it from City Hall.

"We don't know what you are using the building for, so you have to tell us," Goldman said.

The commission also passed an ordinance to change garden restrictions in the city.

In previous meetings, a code enforcement violation was brought to the attention of commissioners when a local restaurant owner decided to grow a garden to use fresh ingredients in his cooking. Seeing nothing wrong with the effort, the commission decided to draft a change to the zoning code.

"Now you can grow a garden on any commercial or residential zoning," said Commissioner Christine Dobkowski. "Before, it was just an addition to your home, but now if you have a residential lot sitting empty, you can go ahead and grow on it as well."

Residents of Bellevue and those traveling through began seeing signs advertising for business in the community this month. The city posted signs that read, "Open your business in Bellevue. Call City Hall for incentives."

Interested callers will be told about the city's impact fee moratorium for commercial properties and the sign ordinance allowing for inexpensive advertising. They also will be advised of counseling available for start-up proprietors.

"We've had interest based on those signs," said Commissioner Kenneth Nadeau. "It's very encouraging."

The commission also looked at expanding community activities. They acquired grants for the expansion of soccer and football fields at the Bellevue Sports Complex and adjusted the master plan to accommodate those new fields.

"Both of those programs have had tremendous growth in the last five years," Nadeau said.

The city also leased the old Book Nook property to the Chamber of Commerce for five years. As a result, groups can rent the property from the chamber for meetings and community events.

The commission recently recognized two longtime members of the community: Lt. Terry Holland and Edna Hardy.

They presented an award to Holland, of the Bellevue Police Department, for his dedication and service.

"He's a true asset to the community. Everybody loves him. In all the years I've been here, I've never heard a disparaging word about him. He's a gentleman through and through," Goldman said.

Dobkowski attended Hardy's 100th birthday party.

"That was wonderful," Dobkowski said. "She's a fantastic lady who has lived in Bellevue pretty much her whole life, and I'm the lucky person who got to attend."

