

Article published Jan 21, 2007

Bellevue officials reconsider recreation fees

**BY AUSTIN L. MILLER
STAR-BANNER**

BELLEVUE - Bellevue city officials have come full circle when it comes to instituting a recreation impact fee.

In 2006, commissioners talked about - and eventually came up - with a formula for how to implement the fee. The proposal, which would have leveled a fee of \$1,380 on new home construction, was abandoned when commissioners couldn't decide how to administer the program.

From that time until now, city officials said they have issued 54 single-family home permits.

Commissioners have decided to revisit the issue because the city is in danger of violating its comprehensive plan, which stipulates 10 acres of recreation space per 1,000 residents. On Tuesday, they directed staff to come up with a recommendation for how to proceed.

In the first calculation, the \$1,380 figure was derived from a combination of the price of land, the state's statistics on how many people live in a household and the number of residents per acre.

Among some of the things Land Development Coordinator Jeff Shrum and the city's staff have to consider before drafting a new ordinance is land cost, site clearing and what rates to charge different developments.

UPDATE

In 2006, Bellevue city commissioners designed a formula for implementing recreation impact fees of \$1,380 on new home construction.

The plan failed after commissioners couldn't reach an agreement on how to administer the fee.

City officials are now reconsidering the impact fees because the city is close to violating the comprehensive plan, which stipulates there must be 10 acres of land devoted to recreational use for every 1,000 residents.

The ordinance, which is expected to be presented to city officials by the first February meeting, will be based on purchasing property and minimal site preparation. The document won't detail how the city might develop the site.

If enacted, the fee would only be assessed on new home construction.

"If they're happy with the draft, we could have it wrapped up in March," Shrum said.

Various dwellings, such as single-family homes, mobile homes and apartments, would not be charged the same fee.

"We have to break it out by units. We can't charge everyone a flat fee," Shrum said.

While developer Ken Boone thinks what the city is proposing is legally sound, he has an important question.

"My question is: How much will it be? Whether it's \$500 or \$5,000, whatever is passed, it's going to be passed on to the consumer," said Boone, who bought a little more than 223 acres with the intent of building homes and businesses on the property.

While Boone says "no one likes to pay impact fees," the cost of doing business anywhere in the state is going to be costly.

"With water and sewer, traffic and fees for schools coming soon, we could easily be paying \$15,000 on top of construction costs," Boone said.

Though crafting an ordinance to address the city's need may be fairly easy, finding a piece of property or properties to fulfill those desires may be difficult. Last year, the county signed off on the city's service area agreement that potentially could increase its boundaries from the current 2-square-miles to 30-square-miles.

Although the city has the capacity to grow 15 times its size, most of the properties would come through annexation. The east side of Belleview is home to the Belleview ballpark, while residents on the west side, according to some, yearn for some type of recreation.

"At some point, we're going to have to look for another parcel," Commissioner Christine Dobkowski said.

Boone said city officials have approached him about purchasing 10 of more than 223 acres he has acquired. He said when they first asked him about the property, he told them he would sell it for close to \$60,000 an acre. He said he wants to work with city officials, but they must make up their minds on whether they want it or not.

"The question is, are they going to buy it today or tomorrow?" Boone said.

Mayor Tammy Moore said the commission should think about what Boone has to offer.

"I think it's something we should consider and give him an answer," Moore said. "About paying \$60,000 [an acre] for it, I think we should talk to him first before making a decision."

Austin L. Miller may be reached at austin.miller@starbanner.com or 867-4118.