

# HOLLISTER FREE LANCE

## Editorial: Impact fee decision shows council has mixed priorities

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By The Free Lance Editorial Board ([editor@freelancenews.com](mailto:editor@freelancenews.com))

A majority of Hollister council members were out of touch with the community's priorities when they approved a completely irrational set of new traffic impact fees that stand to send an anti-business message to prospective developers.

The Hollister council last week voted 3-2 in favor of ratifying a new structure for traffic impact fees - the levies charged to builders and meant to offset costs for associated infrastructure needs.

Those impact fee changes include the following:

- For single-family residential, the maximum fee per unit would decrease from \$26,382 to \$5,233.
- For multi-family residential, the maximum fee per unit would decrease from \$13,191 to \$3,233.
- For commercial, the fee would go from \$0 to \$3,395 per 1,000 square feet.
- For office space, it would go from \$0 to \$8,245 per 1,000 square feet.
- For industrial, it would go from \$0 to \$1,087 per 1,000 square feet.

In a bizarre twist of events, council members openly acknowledged the new fee structure - compiled using population projections from the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments - made no sense. So what did they do? Three of the elected leaders - council members Doug Emerson, Victor Gomez and Pauline Valdivia - approved of it regardless while underscoring that officials can modify the figures before a related 60-day window expires.

Instead of brainstorming for creative solutions such as cutting the proposed fees across the board by a certain percentage or placing a moratorium on certain categories of impact fees - including commercial or industrial - they continually used the same, shallow excuse throughout the meeting: That the AMBAG-concocted numbers were "legally defensible" if challenged in the courts.

What those council members failed to understand is that just because something is legally defensible doesn't mean it is politically defensible.

Their decision was an act of monumentally poor government planning. They knew the data provided by AMBAG was dead wrong and out of touch, yet they submitted to the metropolitan planning organization's self-imagined iron fist and once again took the easiest route possible by stamping approval to something they admittedly question and outwardly oppose.

In the meantime, Gomez was among the council members who voted for the impact fees. Curiously enough, during the same discussion, he railed against roadblocks to new development in Hollister and pronounced that if he were a developer, he never would build anything here.

Gomez not only took the passive, non-leadership approach to a problem as his two colleagues did, but he also publicly dogged the city and its economic development efforts while doing so.

With the exception of the dissenters, members Robert Scattini and Ray Friend, the council majority showed a disturbing willingness to accept several steps in the wrong direction at a time when Hollister can ill afford it.

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