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Bellevue city staff tasked with drafting construction impact fee for recreation

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BELLEVUE - By unanimous agreement, a proposal to create an impact fee on new home construction - with the money collected going toward buying land for recreation - is now in the hands of the Bellevue city staff.

That document is expected to be produced by the next meeting, possibly including a proposed dollar figure.

The ordinance will be based on purchasing property and minimal site preparation. The document will not detail how the city might develop the site.

"It's just for the bare necessities, like clearing for an entrance," Mayor Tammy Moore said.

The measure has been discussed since early 2006. City officials say the gap between green space and the population is rapidly closing.

The city's comprehensive plan, which is mandated by the state, requires 10 acres of recreation space per 1,000 residents. Presently, the city has roughly more than 40 acres for recreation and a population close to 4,000. Those numbers soon may change with several large-scale developments coming to the area.

THE ISSUE

With the green space-to-population ratio closing rapidly, city officials want to implement an impact fee on new home construction to purchase land for recreation.

WHAT'S NEW?

City officials have directed staff to draft an impact fee ordinance so they can discuss its content at their next meeting in February.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If an agreement is reached at the next meeting, then a public hearing could be held in February.

Before commissioners agreed to move forward, City Attorney Fred Landt III told them that they need to consider several things before making a final decision. First, he said, the city must identify a need for a policy. If so, then it must identify what type of improvement that is needed. And finally, the city must ensure the fees will benefit those paying for the improvements.

Tuesday's agreement was first suggested months ago by Moore. At the time, Moore said the city should have passed an interim ordinance that would have allowed it to collect money to purchase property until a permanent plan could be devised. Commissioners, however, balked at that plan.

Commissioner Michael Goldman said Tuesday the city cannot stand idly by without addressing the problem.

"Now it's January, and we haven't done anything. We need to go ahead and do something," Goldman said.

To date, several large scale developments - namely Kirk Boone's 900 units off Baseline Road and an estimated 200-home development - are on tap to come into the city.

When those come on line, Land Development Coordinator Jeff Shrum said the city will be over its limit.

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