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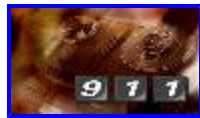


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Local/State

Meeker announces plans for city

Saturday, December 01, 2007 | 5:54 PM

 By Tim Nelson

RALEIGH -- Raleigh Mayor Charles Meeker unveiled his top three agenda items Thursday -- the first initiatives for the new city council to tackle. Those initiatives include permanent year-round water restrictions and higher impact fees for builders.

Falls Lake is at its lowest level ever, and the worst drought in the state's history shows no signs of letting up. But already, Raleigh's mayor is talking about what to do once we get out of it. "I think this drought and the two other droughts have now taught us that water supply and water shortage is an ongoing issue," Meeker says. "It's not just a one-time thing, it's not just a once-a-decade problem. It's something

we're going to have to deal with every year."

Charles Meeker wants the capital city's watering rules to be changed, to be permanent and to be very strict.

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"We're gonna need to have restrictions that are as tough as anybody," says Meeker.

Meeker says he'll push for restrictions that would limit lawn watering to one or two days a week during certain hours all year long, even if Falls Lake is full.

"We're gonna want to have restrictions that make sense so the public can have acceptable yards. At the same time we're not gonna have watering 3 or 4 days a week, that's just something we're gonna have to come to an end with," says Meeker.

Impact Fees

Every time a new home goes up in Raleigh, the developer building it pays what's called an impact fee. That money goes to fund roads and parks.

Right now, the fee is about \$1200 per home, much lower than many communities including Cary and Apex. It could soon double, however, if the mayor gets his way. Charles meeker is pushing for an increase to about \$2500.

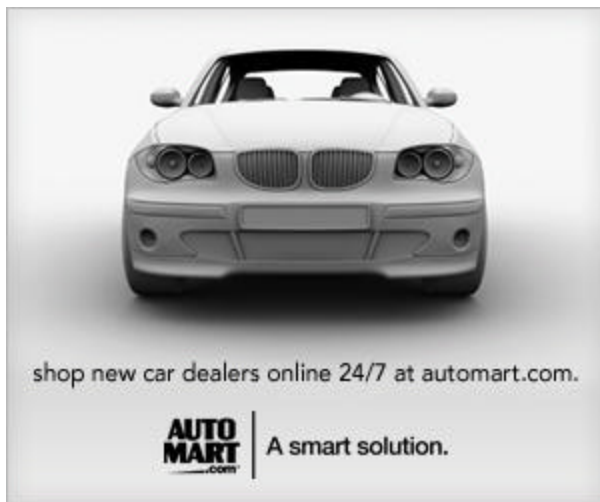
"I want the fee to be high enough that it makes a substantial contribution to the new parks and roads, but not too high so it adversely affects the housing market," Meeker says.

Homebuilders argue the increase Meeker is proposing would do just that, and they question whether the timing for a fee hike is appropriate.

"We would hope with the housing market sort of in flux right now that he would wait and sort of see what happens with the market," says Tim Minton with the Raleigh-Wake Homebuilders Association. He says builders may pass along the extra costs to homebuyers.

"I would suggest go out and buy your house now," Minton says. "Who knows what's gonna happen the next 6 months?"

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