



June 29, 2007

Town OKs park impact fee

Builder or developer would pass cost along

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PLAINFIELD -- New homes in Plainfield will get a little more expensive beginning next year with a new tax to help expand the town's parks.

The Town Council on Monday approved an impact fee of \$850 to be paid by the builder or developer applying for a building permit for a new home.

Builders pass such impact fees for parks, roads, schools or other municipal infrastructure on to home buyers.

The ordinance contains a six-month delay before it becomes effective. That will allow builders and new home buyers time to learn about the fee and to add it into contracts for new construction after Jan. 1.

To meet that timetable, town attorney Mel Daniel reminded the council to adopt the fee before July 1.

The purpose of the fee is to charge new home buyers a fair share for the additional parks and recreational facilities that they will have available.

Existing residents of the town have been paying for development of the parks through their property taxes.

The Builders Association of Greater Indianapolis said Plainfield's fee of \$850 seems consistent with other communities in the metro region. Those with the park impact fee, such as Carmel, Fishers and Franklin, typically range from \$700 to \$1,000.

Local and regional builders had asked for the six-month waiting period to give them time to adjust prices.

Plainfield hired an independent consultant to help determine the size of the fee based on housing trends, the town's demographics and other factors.

The consultant's report said the impact fee could be justified at more than \$1,000 by following the criteria set in a 1991 state law allowing local park impact fees.

However, Plainfield council members accepted the suggestion of a study committee and the town's plan commission to set the new tax below the maximum.

The ordinance also gives a developer or builder an option, with town approval, of building a public park or recreational facility instead of paying cash.

Parks Director Clay Chafin said the revenue, estimated at approximately \$400,000 a year, will help with new construction in Plainfield's growing parks and trails system.

The town has seven parks and plans to develop more. Long-term plans include adding more sports features such as another lazy river to the Splash Island water park and Plainfield Recreation Center.

Construction continues to expand the miles of hiking and biking trails that weave through Plainfield. The town's goal is to connect every neighborhood and park by trail.

And Plainfield has leased rights from the Indianapolis Airport Authority for land for a park on the far eastside of town near Indianapolis International Airport.

Also in the Hendricks County area, the town of Pittsboro is seeing a home-building boom spilling over from Brownsburg and around the Steel Dynamics mill. Pittsboro adopted a park impact fee last year of about \$1,000.

The regional builders association has strongly objected to just one town's action, filing a lawsuit last year when the Zionsville Town Council adopted a fee of \$1,862.

The builders association suit, pending in Boone County courts, said the Zionsville council ignored its consultant and the criteria set by state law that would have placed the park fee around \$1,000.