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Planners approve new fee schedule for parks

The money will help finance rec facilities for new housing.

By Cathy Locke - Bee Staff Writer

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After six months of negotiations and revisions, the El Dorado Hills Community Services District received the county Planning Commission's blessings for a new fee schedule to help pay for park and recreation facilities to serve new development.

If approved by the county Board of Supervisors, the fee for a new single-family home in most of El Dorado Hills would be \$9,807, a 39 percent increase over the current fee, but less than the 118 percent initially sought.

The Planning Commission is charged with determining whether the district's facilities master plan and fee study are consistent with the county general plan, the long-term blueprint for growth. The commission sent the district back to the drawing board twice in the past six months, arguing that the higher fees ran counter to the general plan's goal of providing affordable housing.

Dianna Hillyer, district planning director, told the commission last week that the latest fee proposal reflected technical corrections in the fee study as well as revised cost estimates and downsizing of some planned facilities. The projected cost of a new aquatics facility, for example, was reduced to \$8 million from \$19 million, she said, and the size of a planned administrative center was cut in half. The district also agreed to accept the North State Building Industry Association's cost estimates, she said.

Hillyer said time will tell whether the fee increase will be adequate to cover new development's share of new facilities. The district proposed the initial 118 percent increase because costs of recent projects proved to be much higher than estimates.

"We plan to continue to build parks. We will continue to meet with the BIA at least quarterly," Hillyer said.

The fees may have to be refined based on actual costs as projects come on line, she said.

District officials have said the fees are expected to generate \$45.4 million for future parks and \$18.3 million for community centers, operations facilities and swimming pools.

Don Barnett of Lennar Communities was among those in the building and development industry who raised questions in January about the initial fee proposal. He praised the district and its consultants for working with industry representatives to modify the proposal.

"We haven't changed the basic park assumptions or facilities," Barnett said. "You will still get the same number of parks."

"I think we've come to an understanding," said Bill Vandegrift, vice president of the district board. "We have to spend within the parameters of our budget."

But Paul Raveling, representing the El Dorado Hills Citizens Alliance, said he believed most residents were more comfortable with the higher fee proposal. Raveling noted that his neighborhood is next to a park site that has remained undeveloped for 19 years. He said the district has a backlog of park projects.

"But," he said, "I don't subscribe to the political theory that the perfect should be the enemy of the good."

Commission member Alan Tolhurst, who represents the South Lake Tahoe area, suggested El Dorado

Hills residents do as Tahoe Basin residents have done and approve a bond measure to fund enhanced facilities.

Hillyer said the district plans to hire a consultant to explore options for funding the portion of new facilities that would serve current residents. In addition, she said, the district will pursue a county ordinance amendment to allow park fees to be charged for new nonresidential development.

District and building industry representatives agreed that employees of stores and business parks in El Dorado Hills, as well as residents, use the community's parks and recreation facilities, and those developments should share in the cost.

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Revised park impact fee proposed

Responding to county Planning Commission and building industry concerns, the El Dorado Hills Community Services District board scaled back park impact fees approved in November for new residential construction and proposed adding a fee for new nonresidential development. The fees, payable upon applying for a building permit, must be approved by the county Board of Supervisors.

El Dorado Hills Community Services District park impact fees

LAND USE	CURRENT FEE	FEES APPROVED BY CSD	
		November 2006	May 2007
Residential <i>Per dwelling unit</i>			
Single family	\$7,073	\$15,399	\$9,806
Serrano* single family	\$2,906	\$5,355	\$2,452
Age-restricted	\$4,157	\$9,008	\$5,736
Multifamily	\$7,073	\$12,724	\$8,103
Serrano* multifamily	0	0	\$2,025
Mobile home	\$4,780	\$11,281	\$7,184
Nonresidential** <i>Per square foot</i>			
Commercial	0	0	\$0.91
Office	0	0	\$1.16
Industrial	0	0	\$0.41
Serrano** nonresidential <i>Per square foot</i>			
Commercial	0	0	\$0.32
Office	0	0	\$0.41

*Fees for homes in Serrano are less because the developer builds the parks in those neighborhoods

**County ordinance exempts nonresidential development from the district's park impact fee.

Unless the county adopts a new or amended ordinance authorizing collection of the park impact fee from nonresidential land uses, the nonresidential fees will not apply.

Source: El Dorado Hills Community Services District

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