Smart Growth News

Nebraska

Lincoln City Council Approves Water Bond, Delays Decision on Developer Impact Fees

In starkly divergent votes, the Lincoln City Council passed a \$58 million water-system bond issuance and a 7 percent water rate increase, but split 4-to-3 to delay a decision on long-debated developer impact fees starting at \$2,500 for each single-family home next year and reaching \$4,500 by 2007, with parallel fees for multifamily and commercial projects. The council's three Republicans tried to postpone the fee vote until they review a mayoral infrastructure-financing study expected in June, but agreed to leave the date open when joined by Democratic Councilwoman Annette McRoy, whose three party colleagues wanted to vote immediately or early next month. Democrat Terry Werner chided the council for the water and impact fee votes inconsistency, saying, "One minute you say you can't move forward without the whole plan, the next minute you say you can" and adding "It blows my mind." Lincoln Journal-Star writer Nate Jenkins notes that the Homebuilders Association of Lincoln appreciates the delay as allowing it more input and that fee proponents object to a poll by an unidentified firm asking residents such manipulative questions as "Would you be more or less likely to support impact fees if the impact fee prevented young new families from affording their first home?" -- Lincoln Journal-Star 11/19/2002

Citing Infrastructure Needs, Lincoln Mayor Includes Developer Impact Fees in Growth Management Plan

"We welcome growth, we support growth, but we have to pay for growth," Lincoln Mayor Don Wesely told those in the City Council and the real estate industry who oppose the main element of his growth-management plan -- a proposal to impose developer impact fees of \$2,500 for single-family homes and of \$1,000 for multifamily residences beginning next June and raise them gradually to \$4,500 and \$1,900 over five years. Fees for commercial projects would vary, but a 10,000-square-foot retail store would cost a builder about \$16,640, reports Lincoln Journal Star writer Bruce Jenkins. Under the mayor's plan, the fees would be extended to projects for areas covered by annexation agreements the city has signed with developers since June; site developers would have an option of funding adjacent land improvements for subsequent city reimbursement; low-income home buyers and renters would be exempted from absorbing residential developer impact fees; a seven-percent water use rate increase slated for early 2003 would help the city to issue another \$10 million in infrastructure

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bonds and perhaps refinance the current \$40 million; and a new committee would search for more funding sources. With the city facing a \$90 million backlog in street, water and sewer improvement projects, Public Works and Utilities director Allan Abbott called the proposed fees a "cornerstone of the infrastructure financing strategy," stressing that even they are insufficient for the city's needs in the next six years. The Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Commission will consider the plan in September, with the City Council's vote likely in October. -- Lincoln Journal Star 8/29/2002

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