

City Council advances street assessment plan

Plan would levy \$355 per linear foot for new development

■ By RaeLynn Ricarte
The Dalles Chronicle

The Dalles City Council is moving ahead on a policy change that will tie new residential development on some lots to a \$355 per linear foot assessment for street improvements.

Last week, the elected body asked Dick Gassman, director of the city's Planning and Community Development Department, to prepare a new ordinance for review at a public hearing in June. The revised code will first be submitted to the state for approval and then scrutinized by the planning commission.

Under the amended code, the city will tie the assessment for partitioning land to issuance of a building permit instead of when the property sells or after a set period of time has passed.

The old policy drew complaints by John Dennee and other residents with large, almost rural tracts of land on the east side of town. They spoke out at a November meeting against having to pay \$50,000 or more to "draw a line on a map" when one or two new lots were created.

They said no new traffic was generated by a land partition and development of the lot might lie years in the future.

After hearing these objections, the city decided it could stifle economic development if the costs were too high to divide up property. They said the

See STREETS, A6

Streets

Continued from Page A1

purpose of the assessment, levied on the street frontage of the original property, was to generate revenue for road, water, sewer, stormwater and sidewalk improvements to accommodate additional population growth and increased traffic.

"We've been listening and getting feedback because we don't want to break the backs of our neighbors and make selling and developing so expensive we can't do it," said Councilor Tim McGlothlin at the November meeting where Dennee and others spoke out.

Councilor Bill Dick said it was a challenge to enact an infill policy that was "fair and consistent," because a public safety hazard was created when development was allowed on

substandard streets. He said it was difficult for fire and police vehicles to navigate these roadways and respond to an emergency.

"We apparently believe in development but we don't believe in making the improvements," he said in reference to the deteriorating condition of Thomp-

son Street. The new code will allow payment of the assessment to be deferred until development is initiated or a Local Improvement District forms to recoup infrastructure costs.

Landowners with corner lots and frontage on both streets will only be charged for one side of the

parcel. Property owners who partition land must agree to give up their right to object to formation of an LID and pay the assessment at that time.

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