

BEAST

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letter voicing his support of fee adjustments that was read into the record by Mayor Jo Bacon.

"The stimulus options before you are similar to the County's," explained Community Development Director Mark Wardlaw.

In recent months the County has adopted several stimulus programs related to building. First, it waived \$100,000 of building and planning fees. The fees will be waived on a first-come, first served basis until \$50,000 of plan check fees and \$50,000 of

permit fees have been waived, or six months has passed, whichever comes first.

Second, the County eliminated its development impact fee program indefinitely, while simultaneously suspending housing mitigation requirements for two years.

"Real or perceived, clients feel that capital improvements are on their shoulders with DIF," explained Craig Tapley of Design Dimension. "We need to eliminate DIF in single family residences and additions."

Tim Flynn, President of the Mammoth Lakes Contractor's Association agreed. "The gains outweigh the losses in these times. Economic stimulus should begin here, locally."

Even Sean Flavin, owner of Sierra Handyman Services, who focuses on small jobs, has seen the trickle down effect of the slowed economy.

"Builders are now doing the jobs I would usually have done," Flavin explained. "There are less jobs available and bids are going out lower. If we can ramp up construction then I can continue to enjoy reuben sandwiches at Skip's restaurant."

Flavin added that in addition to fees being lowered, there should also be a requirement that development projects have to use local workers. Councilman Skip Harvey took that a bit further and claimed that material as well as labor should be local.

Mickey Brown of local Resort Property Realty shed a different light on the current state of local fees. She explained that at the peak, units at the Westin were selling for \$1,000 per square foot. Today, the remaining units will most likely go for \$400 per square foot.

"I spoke with a few builders and they said that if the project were built today it would cost \$450 per square foot

[including fees]," Brown explained. "We wouldn't be able to cover the costs with what we are currently selling it for."

However, Council wasn't ready to commit. Councilmember Rick Wood wasn't sure if fee reductions were the correct carrot to dangle.

"I get the problem, but I don't know if fee reductions will be the stimulant for the economy," Wood said. "Are the fees the tipping point? Builders I have spoken with say yes, but I want a firmer handle [on the idea]."

Harvey wanted more information on the impact of waiving fees.

Councilman John Eastman did not have direction for staff on Wednesday evening. Instead he took the audience on a trip down memory lane. "The Town of Mammoth has no redevelopment opportunities because a Court of Appeals took it away," Eastman said. "We had to look for another tool, which is why we have DIF."

**Meanwhile, at the state level, Gov. Brown wants to eliminate Redevelopment agencies because of all the mismanagement and abuse. See Sheet story archived online at www.thesheetnews.com/archives/8037.*

The discussion will be brought back to Council's Aug. 3 meeting.

Search and Rescue granted waivers

The Mono County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team was granted a full waiver of DIF for its new permanent base facility being developed on the Mammoth Community Water District's property. The project's permit processing fees paid to date shall also be refunded, and any additional fees shall be waived. The project was also deemed exempt from payment of affordable housing and public art fees.

The Mammoth Lakes Fire District as well as the Mammoth Unified School District have also waived fees for this project. MCWD is currently working with its legal staff to determine whether or not it can as well.

The project was deemed eligible for these fee waivers not only because it is a non-profit group, but also because of the services the team provides the Town and the County.

"We can't even begin to reimburse the team for what they do," said Craig Tapley of Design Dimension, who is working on the project. (SAR is a group of volunteers dedicated to saving lives. They invest thousands of hours each year to training and calls.)

Council unanimously approved the resolution to waive the fees, but Councilman Rick Wood expressed the desire to develop guidelines for future fee waiver requests.

"We should use guidelines rather than just going by how we feel about the applicant," Wood said.

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Mammoth Lakes 2011
SUMMER OF STEWARDSHIP
TRAIL DAYS
MAMMOTH LAKES TRAIL SYSTEM
Coldwater Trailheads

Welcome Coldwater into summer with a morning of maintenance at one of the Lakes Basin's most popular trailheads!

WHAT: Trail and trailhead improvements, trash pickup, and related tasks, followed by lunch and raffle prizes for volunteers.

SATURDAY, JULY 30, 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

WHERE: Meet in the Coldwater parking area. Please carpool!

WHO: Volunteers of all ages and abilities! Work attire (close-toed shoes, long pants/shirt) is required; please dress for current weather.

Check www.mltpa.org, e-mail explore@friendsoftheinyo.org, or call (760) 873-6500 for the latest info.