

## Suspension of developer fees will get closer look after 'political gimmick'

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After a protest, a counterprotest and an emotional volley of political barbs, the City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to form a committee to study local economic stimulus strategies.

The debate was ignited a week ago when Councilman Rodney Glassman put forward a proposal to suspend most fees levied on developers to cover the infrastructure costs of growth, commonly known as impact fees.

The idea, he said, was to create jobs and jump-start the ailing economy.

Glassman submitted letters of support from builders and environmentalists, about 150 of whom rallied for the proposal in the hour before Tuesday's study session.

But the proposal was sidestepped by Glassman's colleagues who were angry, saying he took credit for an idea other ward offices were exploring and put a divisive debate center stage.

Councilwoman Regina Romero called the proposal a "political gimmick" that forced a "win-lose situation" in which developers benefited at the cost of affordable housing and neighborhood goals.

Councilwoman Nina Trasoff described Glassman's presentation as misleading, saying that his "lawyerly asking of questions" led to "half truths."

Councilwoman Shirley Scott presented the compromise task force plan that outlined a dozen groups to participate and set a 30-day time frame.

The task force will consider proposals to delay or suspend impact fees and to allocate some developer fees to affordable housing or mandate that developers build affordable

housing into plans. It is also free to weigh other options.

The group's discussions will be coordinated by the Metropolitan-Pima Alliance, whose members are largely in the building industry.

Among the proposed task force participants are the Southern Arizona Home Builders Association, Tucson Association of Realtors, Habitat for Humanity, Sustainable Tucson, the local plumbers and pipefitters union, the Neighborhood Infill Coalition and a historic neighborhood representative.

Also at Tuesday's study session, the council announced plans to buy part of the West Side hiking mecca Tumamoc Hill and to accept liability for an old landfill there. The decision was key in years-long wrangling between the city and Pima County aimed at designating the hill as open space.

In another announcement, the council appointed Deputy Finance Director Silvia Amparano to be interim finance director. The former director, Frank Abeyta, resigned two weeks ago after holding the position for less than two months.

A decision on how to proceed with selling about a third of city's yearly allocation of Central Arizona Project water was delayed until next week.

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