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Stimulus Package Up for Renewal

By Cathy Tyson

The Lafayette stimulus package was recently discussed by the City Council; they were unanimously in favor of asking staff to prepare an approval resolution for the following meeting. If accepted, this would extend certain business incentives until June 30, 2010. Without extension, the current economic stimulus package will expire on December 31, 2009.

Recognizing that Lafayette has been negatively impacted by the current depressed economy, City Manager Steven Falk noted, "This economic downturn has created a ripple effect across the community causing a slowdown in the development of property," in a letter to residents after the initial package passed earlier this year. Because the economy is still in the doldrums, city officials want to do what they can to continue to entice businesses to come to Lafayette.

Some of the six incentives were more popular than others, for example, there were sixty- three applicants that took advantage of the waiver for Waste Management Performance Security fee, according to Michael Cass, Assistant Planner for the City of Lafayette. Normally this fee is paid to the city to ensure clean-up associated with construction and is set at 2% of total project cost. This fee will be refunded at the end of a project assuming 50% of all construction waste is recycled.

Also popular were applications for sign permits, due to the fee being waived. That fee is \$525 if the application goes through the design review process or \$400 if handled by the zoning administrator. In addition, if a variance is required there can be substantial fees on top of the cost of obtaining a permit - those would be waived as well if a continuation of the stimulus package passes.

According to a staff report, "The cost of any street trees required to be planted as a condition of development in the Downtown will be reimbursed," if the developer submits a building permit and completes all work within two years.

Expiration dates for hillside development permits, design review permits and land use permits set to expire between now and June 30, 2010 will automatically be extended for one additional year.

Non-conforming uses and walkway reimbursement have not been taken advantage of so far, but perhaps may be in the future.

"The stimulus package has been well received by residents and local business. The incentives that are most frequently requested are the waivers of sign permit and waste management security performance fees and the extension of planning permits" commented Planning and Building Manager Niroop Srivatsa. "Staff will evaluate sales tax and property tax revenues and the number of development applications received in the first quarter of 2010 to gauge if the economy is showing signs of improvement." This matter will be voted on at the November 9 City Council meeting. Check www.lamorindaweekly.com for an update on the vote.

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