Baker council looks at new zoning ordinance

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BAKER — The Baker City Council got its first look at a new zoning ordinance Tuesday night and passed the ordinance back to the joint committee of the council and zoning commission to hold public hearings.

At least three public hearings will be held on the ordinance and the accompanying comprehensive development plan for the city, according to Councilman Duke Welch, who chaired the joint committee.

Welch recognized members of the committee that helped draft the ordinance and also praised Don Neisler of the Capital Region Planning Commission for his help in writing the comprehensive development plan.

"It's not perfect," Welch said of the draft ordinance. "But it's a revision that's brought us from 1960 to 1985." Welch said the draft ordinance is "well thought out and comprehensive."

Mayor Pete Heine stressed that the proposed ordinance is not the final product. "This is only a draft. There are a number of things in here that'll never make it to the end. I think we all know that."

"There'll be a number of public hearings," Heine said, for people in Baker to recommend changes in the ordinance.

"I encourage everybody to get involved in this," Heine said. "It'll affect everybody in town. And when it's passed it's going to be too late to do anything about it."

The joint committee worked for two and a half years to draft the ordinance. The first public hearing is tentatively set for Nov. 14.

The matter of street conditions in Meadows of Chaleur Subdivision also came up again on Tuesday's agenda at the request of Councilman James Pourciau. Pourciau, during a meeting last summer, complained that the streets are full of cracks and are substandard.

Pourciau on Tuesday recommended that a soil laboratory be hired by the city to make borings of the streets and to analyze the composition of the materials.

"I made another inspection (of the streets) Monday," Pourciau said. "The streets are not any worse and they're not any better either."

The developer still has until Dec. 26, when the one-year surety bond on the roads expires, to make any necessary repairs to the streets Heine said. The mayor suggested that he be allowed to contact the developer and inform him of the city's concern over the streets and to carry the matter over until the council's next meeting. The council approved Heine's suggestion.

After the council adjourned it met as the Board of Commissioners of the Baker Consolidated Utilities Co. to discuss the reimbursement of $250,000 to residents in the Leland College Annex Subdivision area for money they paid for a sewer rehabilitation system.

Last year the city was promised reimbursement by the state for that portion of the money paid to install a new sewer system in the Leland College area.

The state's promise was only verbal and the city has nothing in writing, Heine said. Sen. Mike Cross, who negotiated the reimbursement with Gov. Edwin Edwards, is doing all he can to secure the $250,000.

"I don't think we should put too much pressure on these folks," Heine said. "This is something they just don't have to do. But I do believe it will come down. The senator has been doing everything he can. He wants to live up to his commitments."

Heine said he has contacted Rep. Jewel Newman and Rep. Richard Turnley, who have also pledged their efforts to secure the money for the predominately black Leland College community.

The amounts residents paid were based on the amount of land that fronted the sewer system. The reimbursements will be based on the amount paid.