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Grand Junction, Colorado

# No decisions

## Grand Junction council's inaction on sewer tap moratorium, flood plain map dominates meeting

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The Grand Junction City Council deliberated until slightly after 1 a.m. today deciding issues as varied as awarding construction bids and whether planters and canopies should be allowed in an alley between Sixth and Seventh streets.

But it was action which council didn't take Wednesday night that dominated the meeting.

Specifically, the council tabled any action on a proposed agreement among the city, county and Grand Valley Home Builders, Limited, designed to head off a possible sewer tap moratorium by increasing the city's treatment capacity by roughly one million gallons daily.

Additionally, council members made no decision on whether to adopt a flood plain map and regulations which would make city residents eligible for federally subsidized flood insurance.

The council is expected to make a decision on the national flood insurance program Sept. 20.

Council members balked at approving the sewer agreement after City Manager Jim Wysocki began to outline "a couple of changes" in a draft agreement hammered out earlier.

One change, which representatives of the builders group were less than enthusiastic about, eliminated a reference to "first consideration" of local firms for developing the interim treatment plan.

"We don't limit contracts," Councilman Larry Brown told representatives of the group, while at the same time Wysocki was acknowledging that the city follows an unwritten policy of favoring local firms whenever possible.

The disagreement over who should be given preference for developing the interim treatment plan, however, was not the key factor in the council's decision not to approve the sewer agreement Wednesday.

Brown asked that consideration of the agreement be tabled after drawing an admission from Wysocki that no ordinance establishing a \$100 surcharge on all new tap fees had yet been developed for council action.

Afterward, Brown explained his position by saying "the only immediacy" involved in Wednesday's deliberations centered on the establishment of an escrow account financed by the proposed surcharge. Without the escrow account, no interim treatment plan can be developed.

Additionally, administrative officials told council members that input from the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission favoring construction of an interim treatment plant at the site for the new valley-wide sewer treatment plant possibly could limit options for expanding the existing sewer plant.

City administrative officials earlier considered using more chemical agents as one method of increasing the existing plant's treatment

capacity.

That proposal, however, apparently does not appeal to the water quality control commission as does construction of an interim plant at the site of the new valley-wide sewer treatment plant, west of the city near the highway department's port of entry station.

Councilman Larry Kosisek said afterward the position of the water quality control commission "throws a completely different light on the entire program."

After Wednesday's meeting, no one was predicting when the agreement would be finalized.

Paul Barru, a representative of the home builders group, said afterward the local professional organization views the interim plan "as a three-way agreement" among the city, county and builders group.

Barru complained that the city appears to have adopted a singular approach to the agreement which minimizes the role of the builders group and the county.

The home builders organization has offered to back the project with \$30,000 in initial planning funds, plus whatever amount under \$300,000 the sewer tap surcharge does not generate.

Barru added, however, that he views the city's approach as "a minor problem" which ultimately will be resolved.

Brown, however, was one council

member who would not predict the outcome of the proposed agreement. "The eventualities involved are not foregone conclusions," he said.

That perspective could possibly apply to the city adopting a flood plain map and regulations in connection with the national flood insurance program.

Opinion was sharply split during a public hearing on the issue Wednesday, with homeowners living within a designated flood plain near the Colorado River generally favoring participation in the program, while several other city residents opposed it.

Homeowners living near the river pleaded for the city to take part in the program so that federally insured loans could be made available for home improvements.

They complained that an Army Corps of Engineers study already has designated the area a flood plain, making them "pawns" in a dispute over local versus federal control.

Once designated a floodplain, federal financing is unavailable for property in the area and conventional financing is made all the more difficult to obtain.

Opponents of the program termed it "blunt, bald coercion" by the federal government and urged the city council to reject it.

The council is expected to decide the issue, which has been considered on several different occasions since 1974, at its next meeting.

