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Thursday, June 23, 2005

LAKE COUNTY

Townhouse plan moves forward in Round Lake

By Jason King
Daily Herald Staff Writer
 Posted Thursday, June 23, 2005

Ryland Homes' plans to build 223 townhouses at Route 120 and Wilson Road in Round Lake are a step closer to reality.

The village board this week approved a conditional annexation agreement with the builder for land on which the Emerald Bay development will be built.

Trustees voted 4-2 on the annexation agreement. Don Newby and Bob Del Prato cast the dissenting votes.

Officials with Big Hollow School District 38 urged the board to reconsider what they believed to be low impact fees paid by Ryland to their district and the Grant High School District.

Todd Wright, a District 38 school board member, said the fees — \$720 for a 2-bedroom townhouse, and \$900 for a 3-bedroom unit — are low compared to impact fees a similar development in Volo paid.

Wright said the district had no leverage negotiating with the developer because the development ultimately will pay for and bring Round Lake's sewer and water service to the Route 120 corridor, which Round Lake hopes will spur commercial growth there.

"From the beginning, that particular development is a strategic piece of their puzzle for whatever their final plan is," Wright said. "If it wasn't so strategic, we might have gotten higher fees."

Mayor Bill Gentes said that was not the case and blamed the district's tardiness in negotiating with Ryland as the reason for the resulting fees.

"We had given them numbers and heard nothing from them," Gentes said. "The village needed this project to move forward, and impact fees came up late in the process. They negotiated quite poorly because they left it later and later and later in the process."

Regardless, Wright said the fees are made worse because they have to be split between the two school districts.

"It's nowhere near the real cost of either buying land for a new school or putting kids in a classroom," he said. "It's a slap in the face from the developer."

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Ryland still needs approval on three other items before moving forward with the project.

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