

Council mulls tax for fire, police protection funding

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The Ione City Council may soon take a proactive approach to public safety if an ordinance providing funding for police and fire protection is approved.

The council is considering a special tax that would be used for updating equipment for the fire and police department

along with hiring new employees to help toward making the community a safer place. There will also be one more officer for the entire city, rather than just for a subdivision.

Ordinance No. 386, discussed by the council at its meeting last Tuesday, authorizes the establishment of a tax that would be an annual fee assessed to new

communities. The Castle Oaks Unit 2 Subdivision is a new community that would be effected by the tax. An amount of \$300 would be billed to each household every year and that money would go directly to the fire and police departments. A similar ordinance will cover the Regan Project, also.

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FUNDING

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"The growth in this town has exceeded public safety," Louis Pietronave, city administrator and police chief, said. "The police has not grown in size compared to the city. It is the same size that it was in the early 90s."

The Ione Fire department would be able to hire one or two full-time employees complimented by volunteers with this new tax.

The new tax would not apply to existing communities, however. Only new communities that plan to get built in the city limits of Ione would see the new tax, Pietronave said.

"This would be just in this

district for any homes that are going in. The \$300 assessment will run with the property so when it is sold the new owner would have to pay," Pietronave said. "When the Castle Oaks Unit 2 Subdivision is built there will be 900 homes built in that community with about 1500 new people. Where is the money to take care of all those new people?"

Other towns form an operational maintenance district and with this district there is an assessment to each resident, he said.

The vote will take place by the property owner, not the home owner and will be done prior to the development.

"In order for all the home owners to vote on this tax there would need to be a 2/3 vote to get it passed and that would be mighty unlikely," Pietronave said.

"It seems like what we are doing is adding new taxes because if this is added to all new subdivisions then a lot of people will pay," Jim Ulm, council member, said.

"We got to start somewhere," Pietronave said. "This is an upfront cost so if people don't want to buy the home then they don't have to."

The council is considering adopting the ordinance but no date has been set for approval.