



Across the Eastside

Bus drivers, district to continue talks

The Bellevue School District and the union representing its bus drivers will continue their contract negotiations this week after failing to reach an agreement in talks on Friday.

A state mediator met with the bus drivers for most of the day Friday and presented a proposal to the district at 5 p.m., said Ann Oxrieder, district spokeswoman. District officials received the offer, reviewed it for about an hour, and will continue looking at it this week.

The next session in the lingering labor dispute is set for Friday morning.

Bus drivers and transportation mechanics are seeking a reported wage increase of 10 percent and improved medical benefits. After contract talks stalled last week, 25 of 46 drivers scheduled to work called in sick, disrupting morning bus service.

Redmond to tackle senior housing again

By Patricia Moir
Journal-American Staff Writer

Pat Vache calls it an attempt to put some diversity into Redmond's neighborhoods. But Richard Cole sees it as a betrayal of Redmond homeowners.

The issue, which has split the City Council, is how much retirement housing should be allowed in Redmond's single-family neighborhoods. Vache is willing to allow retirement homes as large as 18 units per acre in some neighborhoods. Cole is not.

Cole, Vache and the rest of the council are scheduled to take up the debate again at their regular meeting Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. at City Hall, 15670 N.E. 85th St. The council wrestled with the issue at two meetings last month and was unable to come up with a new policy.

Cole campaigned against the current policy — which allows retirement homes as large as 25 units per acre in some neighborhoods — when he ran for the council last fall. He insists that the big complexes are out of place in single-family neighborhoods and unfair to those who bought houses there.

"(They) have an inalienable right to expect that (the neighborhood) is going to remain single family. The city has no right to go in and change it," he said.

Vache acknowledged that some retire-

ment houses proposed in the city have been bigger than the council expected. He said that's why the council has approved only one project in a single-family neighborhood, a 40-unit complex known as Peter's Creek Retirement Residence, which will be built at the intersection of 148th Avenue N.E. and the Kirkland-Redmond Road.

HOWEVER, Vache thinks a council goal of making it possible for seniors to remain in single-family neighborhoods is a good one.

"It started out as good social policy," said Vache, who backs a compromise proposal that would allow retirement homes from 12 to 18 units per acre in some neighborhoods.

Developers claim anything smaller than that wouldn't be economical. But the proposal is still too big for Cole, who insists he has nothing against retirement homes or senior citizens as neighbors. "I think they'd make great neighbors," he said. "It's the size and scale of the buildings. If they could make these things look like single-family homes, I don't think I'd be as concerned."

Cole thinks it makes more sense to put the retirement complexes in neighborhoods zoned for apartments or downtown, where they can be as large as 50 units to the acre, and where residents can be close to buses, stores and other conveniences.

Developers, however, argue that the higher price of land in those areas makes it tough to build affordable retirement housing.

"The economics are that (the land) is more valuable for an apartment building," said Bob Ashworth, a former City Councilman who owns a commercial real estate company.

Jim Godfrey, developer of the Peter's Creek project, said it simply costs more to build and staff a retirement home because of the need of a common dining area, lounge, and commercial-size kitchen.

However, even on the less expensive land in single-family neighborhoods, private retirement homes aren't cheap.

Godfrey estimated that it will cost between \$800 and \$1,600 a month to live at Peter's Creek. The cost will vary according to the amount of housekeeping, meals and other personal care a resident requires. Godfrey said the rates might have been higher if he had to build in another area.

ALTHOUGH his project has already been approved, Godfrey said he would hate to see Redmond back away from allowing more retirement housing in single-family neighborhoods.

He said Redmond has been more willing to consider senior housing in single-family

neighborhoods than other Eastside cities. "Other cities put (retirement housing) in commercial districts," he said.

The council may not resolve the issue Tuesday night. The expected absence of Councilman Arnold Tomac could result in a 3 to 3 standoff.

Tomac joined Cole and Councilwomen Rosemarie Ives and Margaret Doman in asking city staff to study a proposal that would ban multi-unit retirement complexes in single-family neighborhoods unless they were located on at least 10 acres of land. Doman has also suggested that ways be found to screen the existing neighborhoods from the new senior complexes.

Vache and council members Steve Church and Nancy McCormick have supported allowing retirement homes from 12 to 18 units per acre in neighborhoods zoned R-4 (four units per acre), R-5 and R-6. However, each project would need council approval.

Public response to the retirement issue has mostly been limited to angry residents living near the proposed projects, such as Peter's Creek. Vache, however, thinks all Redmond residents have something at stake in the council's decision. At some point, he said, many of us will need senior housing.

"I hope there are opportunities for us to live in a style we'd like," he said.



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Redmond panel puts restrictions on retirement housing

By Patricia Moir
Journal-American Staff Writer

The Redmond City Council decided Tuesday to severely restrict retirement homes in the city's single-family neighborhoods.

In a 4 to 2 vote, the council rescinded a controversial policy that had permitted retirement homes as large as 25 units per acre in some neighborhoods. Although retirement homes will still be allowed in some single-family neighborhoods, they will have to

be much smaller. The new policy limits the size to four to six units per acre in areas zoned R-4 (four units per acre), 5 and 6.

COUNCIL members Richard Cole, Rosemarie Ives and Margaret Doman argued the new restrictions would help ensure that retirement homes are compatible with surrounding single-family homes.

But Councilman Pat Vache, who opposed the new policy, said it also ensures that they will never be

built. Vache cited testimony from developers who have said the small complexes are uneconomical.

Vache said those who support the new restrictions might just as well admit that they don't want retirement residences in single-family neighborhoods.

"You're going to have to have a lot of money if you want to be retired and live here," added Councilman Steve Church, who also opposed the tight restrictions.

Councilwoman Nancy McCor-

mick agreed with them, but still cast the tie-breaking vote in favor of the tighter restrictions.

"I'm voting for the sake of expediency, to get this issue over with," she said.

The council had been unable to agree on a policy at two previous meetings, and seemed ready to deadlock again Tuesday in the absence of Councilman Arnold Tomac. Tomac had indicated at an earlier meeting that he supported tighter restrictions.

Although McCormick moved the council off dead center, she made it clear that she wasn't happy with the outcome.

"I am disappointed because I always felt Redmond was a progressive city," she said. "My whole purpose was to see senior citizens integrated into our neighborhoods."

Doman said she was acting out of concern for single-family homeowners who have opposed the multi-unit retirement complexes

in their neighborhoods.

The council approved only one retirement complex under the old policy — the Peter's Creek Retirement Residence that will be built in the Greenbrier neighborhood.

However, three proposals that are still pending will be considered for approval under the old ordinance. One of those is the Emerald Heights complex, a retirement complex of about 300 units that would be built on 40 acres of land near Redmond High School.

Redmond wants county to add park to ballot