

What is the standard of fairness at City Hall? We'll soon find out.

Pulte Homes, a national builder wants to develop an 85 acre site in Prior Lake, with 132 homes ranging in price up to a million dollars. To proceed Pulte wants road access and extension of sewer and water lines to the property. A route selected is through the Rolling Oaks neighborhood of 10 homes.

The estimated cost to upgrade Rolling Oaks to accommodate the Pulte project is \$912,431. Pulte wants the Rolling Oaks project, but the homeowners on Rolling Oaks don't. So who should pay if the project goes ahead?

City Manager Boyle's proposal presented to City Council in October last year was for Pulte to pay nothing. He proposed that 10 Rolling Oaks homeowners should pay \$819,431, with the remainder from City funds. Thankfully the Council did not accept Boyle's proposal.

Fast forward to the recent April 28th Council meeting. City Manager Boyle's latest proposal is for Rolling Oaks homeowners to pick up \$521,066 of the cost, with \$306,365 coming from City funds and adjustments, and a "voluntary contribution" of \$85,000 from Pulte. The City's documents have been carefully crafted so as to imply that the project is for the sole benefit of Rolling Oak's residents, thereby designating any funding from Pulte as purely "voluntary".

So what is fair? With the proposed Pulte project involving \$50 million to \$100 million in home sales, Pulte is willing to "voluntarily" kick in \$85,000. Rolling Oaks homeowners whose ten homes in total have a market value of less than \$3 million are expected to kick in \$521,066.

The Council will host a Public Hearing on May 27 to consider the Boyles/Pulte proposal, before making a decision. Hopefully the Council will base their decision on a responsibility to serve residents of Prior Lake (including the good folks who live on Rolling Oaks), and not be guided by a belief that economic development is always good, even if some residents get hurt. I'm optimistic that the Council decision will be based on what is right, rather than on what can be legally justified.