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## Bonner County moving toward impact fees

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Program designed help infrastructure keep pace with growth

SANDPOINT -- Bonner County plans to put itself in the running to become one of the first counties in Idaho to implement development impact fees.

Commissioners unanimously agreed on Tuesday to begin seeking out consulting firms to guide the county through the process of setting up the fees, which are used to help ensure public infrastructure improvements are in step with the march of development.

Commissioner Todd Crossett said ballpark estimates for the establishing the fee program range between \$40,000 and \$60,000. Bringing other taxing districts into the program could run about \$8,000 per district, he said.

"I think this is a good investment and it's going to add an important funding source for the county," Crossett said during Tuesday's board meeting.

Commissioners Lewis Rich and Joe Young agreed.

Impact fees are used to shift the burden of paying for infrastructure needs resulting from new development. Impact fees can be used to improve water and sewer infrastructure, roads, parks and open space, and public safety.

Idaho lawmakers have recently made it easier to implement such fee programs, but the enabling legislation is still something of a labyrinth, according to Crossett.

"It's kind of arduous. It's not an easy thing to do," he said after the meeting.

Crossett said cities seem to have an easier time implementing the fee programs because of their geographic size and concentrated growth. Sandpoint has impact fees, as do Coeur d'Alene, Spirit Lake and Hayden.

Ada County is in the process of implementing an impact fee program, Crossett said.

In order to set up the program, counties have to establish baseline data for population, existing housing and commercial development, and inventory public facilities. Counties then adopt level-of-service standards for public facilities, such as a road's carrying capacity and parks per capita.

Crossett said build-out projections and development cost for capital improvements to public facilities also have to be nailed down.

Fees calculated using the baseline data and projections cannot be used for maintenance and must be reasonably proportional to the actual impacts which are created.

Idaho code is particularly stringent when it comes to impact fees because they need to be applied equally and demonstrated to be justified, said Crossett.

The study and implementation process, which includes a public review component, can last six to eight months.

"I'd love to have it all done by the end of the year," Crossett said.