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Home & Garden

Creekside Chronicles this week.....

What are impact fees?
Creekside Chronicles By MaryAnn Anderson



(This is the third of four columns by the Andrews resident. Please write or email the Sentinel and provide us with your

point of view.)

Yes, I hear all of you wondering if I am completely out of my mind. First, zoning and ridge laws and now impact fees. Well, just read on and think about things. And think how much this county is growing and how fast. Ask yourself what you want Cherokee County to be in 5 years - 10 years.

Let's discuss what impact fees are and what they can mean to the citizens and infrastructure of the communities in Cherokee County.

Impact Fees are charges imposed upon new development as a condition of development approval to pay for a proportional share of the cost of improvements to the county's infrastructure. The obligation to pay happens when an application for a building permit is requested. The impact fee is paid before the certificate of occupancy is issued.

There are five (5) general government impact fees: transportation, fire protection, right-of-way, park, and school. These fees are charged to new development, both residential and non-residential, to help pay for the structure's impact on the road, park, school and fire network, otherwise it comes out of

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our pockets by way of higher taxes.

Don't go into a panic. The county can also have impact fee relief programs such as the Affordable Housing Relief Program to encourage development in economically distressed areas. Economic development incentives can be provided to qualified business creating quality jobs in the county. These kinds of incentives are a win-win for the county, in my opinion.

Impact fees are used as a form of land-use regulation designed to assure that communities maintain adequate levels of public facilities in the face of growth. I know the attitude of many is it's my property and no one tells me what I can do with it. That's fine as long as long as it is for the common good of the community as well. Cherokee County is already experiencing growth but we have no impact fees. So, who foots the bill? You do through your taxes!!

However, if growth is at a manageable pace, adequate public facilities can be provided as the impacts of growth develop. To assure adequate public facilities, impact fees are assessed and dedicated principally for the provision of additional water and sewer systems, schools, libraries, parks and recreation facilities, and other infrastructure made necessary by the presence of new residents in the area. The funds collected are designated for specific use.

Impact fees are not always the best way in which to finance most public facilities for a variety of reasons, of which I have heard many, but instead taxes are used in our taxes. However, in the absence of the legal or political ability to raise taxes combined with a desire to maintain level of service quality in their communities, elected officials may see impact fees as a practical solution. I certainly hope our elected officials will see the benefits and agree. At least start talking about it.

Citizens of Cherokee County, development has already started. It is crucial that we encourage our elected officials to do what is right for the common good in not just a select few who are resisting the inevitable - development and change in our county. If you need more proof, just drive down Hwy 515-575 towards Atlanta. Remember what it was in see what it is now in uncontrolled growth.

We need zoning and ridge laws in we needed them on

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the books yesterday. I have been warned that the "Z" word can create riots at the courthouse. Well, that is exactly what I am attempting to do ñ only with a sensible outcome this time. The county needs to pull together and take control of the growth ñ smart growth. Do not allow what has taken place in other counties to infect this magnificent valley just because you think things will work out like they always have. I believe we already see those days are forever gone. It is time to think smart ñ smart growth! We must support our elected officials in doing the right thing for the county as a whole ñ not parts and pieces! Ok, now its your turn to talk.

Till next time, thanks for the hospitality.