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Waldron Studies Water Fee

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The Waldron City Council is considering levying a 50-cent fee on water bills to pay for preliminary work associated with building a water source lake with the city of Booneville.

A public hearing to receive residents' comments is planned at 6 p.m. Thursday at City Hall, 370 Featherston St., Waldron Clerk/Treasurer Sherry Johnston said Tuesday.

Johnston said the fee would be a monthly charge and would be used to establish a dedicated fund for the water source project.

If the council approves an ordinance levying the impact development fee at its regular meeting Monday, it probably would go into effect in 30 days and residents probably would see the fee on their Oct. 1 bills, Johnston said.

According to the proposed ordinance, a 25 cents per 1,000 gallons water usage would be levied on the first 2,000 gallons of water usage. The fee would be capped at 50 cents a month.

Funds generated by the fee would be dedicated to costs associated with site selection, environmental issues, design, maintenance and operations of a future new water supply, treatment facility and transmission system, the ordinance states.

Johnston said city officials also thought levying the fee would show the city's "good intention" when it comes to applying for funding grants.

According to its ordinance, Booneville set a 25 cents per 1,000 gallons water usage water development fee for the same reason in May.

Johnston said the history of the proposed jointly owned water source dates back years to when Booneville and Waldron officials got together to explore water source options. Out of those committee meetings rose a proposed lake in the Elm Park area between the two cities, she said.

The two cities in conjunction with the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission have engineers, McClelland Consulting Engineers of Fayetteville, working on a project plan and estimated costs, Johnston said.

Waldron is at the point where proposed large development would have to be declined because of the strain on water supply, Johnston said.

"In last year's drought, we came very close to having to restrict water usage. This (new water source) would be necessary to support new industry and residential growth, but we also have to support what's here," Johnston said.

Although the proposed ordinance doesn't specify it, if the fee is passed it would have to remain in place until a more permanent funding structure is set up, Johnston said.