



Wednesday, September 12, 2007

BV planning commission hears opposition to proposed impact fees

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Times Reporter

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Several citizens spoke against a proposed ordinance imposing impact fees to be used for town roads and suggested they would rather see a bond issue or sales tax increase at the regular meeting of the Buena Vista Planning and Zoning Commission Sept. 5 at the community center.

During staff discussion on the draft ordinance, planning commission chair Robert Flint explained that this is something that they have been trying to accomplish for several years to pay for streets.

An impact fee could be charged for new development and expansion of existing uses for impacts on roads. Town planner Bev Kaiser said it is a common way to assure costs are not passed on to the taxpayers. The Town commissioned a Street Improvements Impact Fee Support Study to examine the possibility of assessing an offsite street impact fee. The Town's matching share of the cost to commission the impact fee study and comprehensive plan update was about \$35,000, according to town administrator Ryan Mahoney.

Some of the roads tentatively designated for improvements included: Arizona, East Main, Court, Gregg, Steele, CR 317 and W. Arkansas.

Mahoney explained a proposed formula for figuring the amount of the fees. On a 1,000- square-foot building for commercial use, the proposed impact fee would be \$4,000. On a residential building, it could be about half of that amount.

Planning commissioner Chris Martin asked about other ways to raise the revenue. Mahoney said a bond issue would be charging residents who have already paid in. As development continues, The Town will have less of an ability to do streets, Mahoney said. This is how you make development pay its own way, Mahoney said.

In a survey during the comprehensive plan meetings, 50 percent said new growth should pay its own way and 29 percent said they should pay for part of it, Martin said. This becomes a philosophy argument, he said.

Among the 40 or so citizens who attended the meeting, 20 of which signed up to speak during public comments, was Gordon Lacy who said the impact fee should be for everyone who uses the roads, the fee limits the number of young families coming in, businesses would move out of town and Johnson Village would grow and construction would go elsewhere.

"I see it as a minus," he said. It adds to the costs of housing, said Realtor Marilyn Lacy, who also said it was anti-growth and anti-business.

Other citizens complained about the high cost of the impact fee, it being another roadblock for economic development, confusion on whether or not it was for new development only and confusion on whether or not it would be retroactive. The term "development permit" needs to be defined, said The Meadows' representative

Mike Allen.

Colorado Center representative, Dave Strosnider suggested a delicate balance with a hard look at splitting the costs for development. "We want to pay our fair share," he said. It also could impact their marketing ability, he said.

This fee could cost a grocery store \$232,000 when expanding, said developer Dean Hiatt, who said the town would lose more business than they would generate.

Other means to raise revenues suggested during the public comments were a bond issue and going to home rule so

The Town can raise the sales tax. Some suggested the impact fee be imposed on only residential development.

Following the public input, the planning commissioners said they did not have enough information to make a decision, and they continued the proposed ordinance on impact fees to a future meeting.

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