



Posted on Thu, Nov. 15, 2007

Troy panel OKs lower fee than school board wa

BY ELIZABETH DONALD
News-Democrat

A Troy City Council committee has approved an impact fee based on house size, but it's about one-quarter what the Triad school board wants to charge. The school board wants to raise the fee to the level of the school board.

The proposal is contingent on St. Jacob and Marine also passing impact fees, as well as Madison County for the unincorporated areas. Mayor Raymond Muniz could not be reached for comment.

Last year, Triad officials approached Troy, St. Jacob and Marine about imposing impact fees on new home construction. The fee would be used for school construction projects.

Troy's proposal would assess an average fee of about \$1,250 to \$1,500 per house.

"It's really a middle-of-the-road between nothing and what the school board proposed," said committee Chairman Allen Adomite.

Mayor Tom Caraker had originally proposed a flat fee regardless of the house's size. He said he wants to make sure the school districts are not overburdened.

"I think we should support our school districts to an affordable degree," he said. "We owe our children the right to a proper and prudent education during these times, so as not to kill or slow down our residential growth."

Adomite expressed similar views. "It concerns me that we can't find ways to achieve property tax equity without placing fees on property owners."

Triad Superintendent Leigh Lewis said her staff has not seen Troy's proposal yet, but they feel they owe it to taxpayers to investigate the proposal.

"We're not as big as Edwardsville and not growing as quickly as they are, but we don't want to ignore what's happening around us. We need to find ways to generate funds to maintain good facilities, and people move into a community because of a school system in many cases. We always go to the same sources to generate money."

Madison County officials will only consider impact fees if all municipalities in a school district pass them first. Regional Superintendent Development Committee on the County Board when that policy was set.

"This was a fair way to provide for districts to move forward for communities that would pass it," Daiber said.

County Board Chairman Alan Dunstan could not be reached for comment.

But Daiber said impact fees are only one component for schools financing new projects. "They still need bond referenda and other revenue sources," he said.

Jerry Rombach, executive officer of the Home Builders Association of Greater Southwest Illinois and a frequent critic of impact fees, said the fee could always be raised.

"We feel obligated to our customers to resist (impact fees)," he said.

Last year, voters approved a \$44 million construction program, including two new schools and expansion, to cope with growth in the district.

Rombach said with the referendum, the fees are unnecessary. "The district has the money it needs to build the schools it will need in the future."

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