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Adviser recommends fees to support growth

By **JAMES MINTON**

Advocate staff writer

Published: Jan 19, 2006

ST. FRANCISVILLE — A consultant gave the West Feliciana Parish Police Jury and Planning and Zoning Commission a detailed outline Wednesday of how the parish should work toward charging impact fees for residential and commercial development.

“There is a price on growth,” said attorney Charles A. Landry of the Jones Walker law firm.

Landry said municipal and parish governments should consider the cost of the growth in every project being developed and tax revenue usually fails to cover the full costs of the infrastructure needed to serve new development.

The jury hired Landry to make recommendations on an impact fee ordinance the jury could consider adopting.

The attorney also is helping the Ascension Parish government with its planning regulations.

Landry said impact fees generally are one-time charges levied on new developments to generate revenue for new or expanded capital improvements necessary because of the developments.

He said much of the debate about impact fees center on “who pays and when,” but Landry recommended charging impact fees for building permits rather than imposing them on the developers of the commercial or residential acreage.

Assessing the latter group sometimes results in developers presenting projects in piecemeal fashion rather than for the entire development.

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The money collected from impact fees should go into separate, interest-bearing accounts set up for each area affected by growth.

If not spent within a specified time, the monies should be repaid to the owners of the property from which the fees were derived, he said.

Landry left the Police Jury and Planning Commission with a 19-page outline of what an impact fee ordinance should and should not include.

He recommended holding a series of public hearings to get input on an ordinance and appointing an advisory committee to oversee the administration of the fee structure.

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