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Friday, May 6, 2005

A.V. home development fees could double

By LEROY STANDISH/Staff Writer

APPLE VALLEY — Although development impact fees are on the verge of being doubled, possibly fetching an additional \$12.8 million for the town in the next year, some town leaders are expressing frustration that growth is outpacing public amenities.

The town's system of roads, sewerage, storm drains and other services are not keeping pace with population growth, according to some members of the Town Council. To address the situation, the Town Council could approve a package of development impact fees that would more than double the current fees assessed for a single family home from \$6,309 to \$12,729.

The increase in development fees is intended to fund public improvements that will be needed to service future development. Repairs for the existing, overburdened infrastructure will have to come from other sources of revenue.

"We need to play catch-up," said Councilman Rick Roelle. "Our infrastructure in the town is not adequate for the population we have now. If we are going to continue to grow like we are growing our infrastructure is going to have to play catch-up."

Roelle estimates the town population to be around 64,000 residents. "The roads were built for 30,000; we are double what we should have as far as vehicles on the roadway," he said. "That's the biggest issue I have."

In Victorville the development impact fee is \$3,900, in Hesperia the fee is \$8,200 and in Adelanto the fee is \$6,200, said Carlos Rodriguez, vice president of the Building Industry Association's Baldy View Chapter.

He said the building industry supports the concept of development fees, but argues that Apple Valley's are out of step with the surrounding Victor Valley.

"Victorville had twice the development (constructing 2,693 homes compared to Apple Valley's 1,019, according to Rodriguez), but Apple Valley is proposing fees that are three times as high," Rodriguez said. "One has to wonder why the jurisdiction of Apple Valley — that ranks third in growth — has fees that are in some cases double or triple neighboring cities."

He has been lobbying the town to, if not to lower the fees, to at least phase them in over time as fee increases were in Adelanto and Hesperia. The sharp increase in fees has the potential of cutting some first-time home buyers out of the market and creating an unfriendly business climate.

Some voices on the Town Council consider a strong housing stock the foundation to a strong retail base that would generate sales taxes for the town.

"Obviously the retailers need customers," said Mayor Scott Nassif. "You can't force a business to open up — you have to create an environment that is conducive to a business opening up and that is something staff is working toward."

Others on the council are desirous of developing town roads and services before more residents arrive.

"We need infrastructure up ahead of housing," Councilman Bob Sagona said. "I

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am not a subscriber to this theory that a couple other council members imply: Build the homes and the infrastructure will come. ... We need retail development up front in order to gain the necessary revenues for the infrastructure we need."

As part of the proposed \$12,729 development impact fee, the town is proposing a storm drainage fee of \$1,500. The money will be collected to update the town's storm drainage master plan. The study will cost an estimated \$600,000 and take up to a year and a half to complete, said Kathie Martin, town spokeswoman.

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