

Star-Telegram

Arlington reviews increasing impact fees to developers

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ARLINGTON -- The City Council is reviewing whether to increase the impact fees charged to developers to help pay for nearly in roadway, water and wastewater capital improvement projects over the next decade.

The council took no position Tuesday after a city staff report that included examples where the dollar amount of some fees could triple.

Councilman Mel LeBlanc said rates are likely to go up but not that dramatically. The city reviews its impact fee rates every five years and has not changed them since 2002.

"Our rates have been historically low, certainly competitive with other cities in the Metroplex," LeBlanc said. "It's really the most equitable way of assessing costs for the community, the people and the businesses."

Arlington's rates fall below those of many other Metroplex cities, including Fort Worth, Grand Prairie and Mansfield, said Jim P. Parajon, director of the Community Development and Planning Department.

Arlington charges 38 percent less on water fees, 67 percent less on wastewater fees and 41 percent less on roadway fees than the maximum it could charge under state law.

According to a staff report given to the council, roadway fees for a new single-family home could be raised from \$670 to \$1,700.

Water fees for a new single-family home could increase from \$480 to \$1,602 if raised to 50 percent of the maximum rate or to \$1,602 if raised to 100 percent, according to the report.

Wastewater fees for that same home could increase from \$380 to \$734 at 50 percent of the maximum rate or to \$1,468 at the maximum rate.

City staffers told council members that impact fees would help the city pay for \$197 million in road projects and \$97 million in wastewater projects, such as the John Kubala Water Treatment Plant expansion, which is planned over the next decade.

Without higher fees, the city might have to issue bonds, tap the general fund or raise water utility fees to pay for the infrastructure support Arlington's growing population, expected to increase by 50,000 people by 2019.

State law allows the city to use the impact fees to recoup costs on completed projects that have excess capacity. The fees can also be used for infrastructure maintenance or repairs.

"This is not to fix old problems. This is related to new growth, new development," Parajon said.

Arlington is also considering assessing fees for users outside the city limits, such as residents in Tarrant County who tap into regional southwest Arlington waterlines, Water Utilities Director Julie Hunt said.

The council will discuss fees again at its next meeting, Feb. 16, and hold a public meeting March 9 to gather input from stakeholders.

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