



Ascension impact fee plan carves new districts

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GONZALES -- A proposal to create three districts within Ascension Parish to receive proposed development impact fees for road construction was unveiled Monday before the parish's Strategic Planning Committee.

The committee took no action on the proposed ordinance, but forwarded it the Parish Council Transportation Committee, which will hash out where the districts should be before the proposed ordinance goes to the full council.

The proposed fees would be charged only to new residential and commercial developments. Exemptions would be provided for existing and resold homes, home renovations under 1,000 additional square feet and home replacements due to disaster. Exemptions also would be provided for newly built public schools and industrial developments.

Gonzales builder Roy Domangue Jr. spoke out against the proposed fees, saying a half-cent sales tax might be a better idea and suggesting the fees could slow growth.

Councilmen Doug Hillensbeck and Kent Schexnaydre said the impact fees are being brought forward because of calls for a building moratorium.

The fee districts are being proposed to ensure the fee plan meets legal muster. Projects funded with impact fees must have some connection with the developments from which the fees are generated, the parish's consultant, Baton Rouge lawyer Charles Landry, has said.

Schexnaydre said the proposed districts are based on traffic flow, also a suggestion from Landry.

Schexnaydre said the districts can't follow existing political boundaries. Parish President Ronnie Hughes had suggested the fee districts follow fire district boundaries.

Landry left the districts unfinished when a final draft of the impact fee ordinance was presented Nov. 22 to a fee committee that had been working on it for several months.

Schexnaydre, chairs the Strategic Planning Committee, said the districts were developed Monday in consultation with parish Department of Public Works Director Bill Roux. The districts are proposed as follows:

- The northern district would take in the top and most developed part of the parish, including the Prairieville and Galvez areas. Its southern boundary would be made by La. 621, east of Interstate 10, and then west of I-10 south to La. 74, stretching to the parish's western boundary.
- The middle district would be bounded by La. 621 on the north and I-10 on the west and take in the Gonzales, Sorrento and St. Amant areas.
- The southern district would be south of La. 74 and I-10 and include all of Ascension Parish's west bank.

As proposed, the three districts would roughly come to a point where La. 621 and La. 74 meet I-10. Schexnaydre said that will allow multiple districts to contribute dollars to high-ticket items expected in that congested area.

He said that while the northern district may be expected to have fewer housing developments because it is more developed, its fees would be generated from commercial projects following rooftops. The middle and southern districts would benefit from more residentially oriented growth, Schexnaydre said.

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