

Ellsworth council ponders ways to curb impact fees

Wednesday, March 16, 2005 - Bangor Daily News

WENDY M. FONTAINE, OF THE NEWS STAFF

ELLSWORTH - City officials are looking at ways to reduce the amount of impact fees that small-business owners would be required to pay under a newly proposed ordinance. City Council members said Tuesday they are concerned about protecting the small businesses that have helped make the local economy what it is.

"I think we've all listened to the public and the business community," Councilor Gary M. Fortier said during Tuesday's council meeting.

The proposal calls for charging new developers fees to help pay for road improvements in the area known as the Myrick Triangle. New construction projects that result in increased traffic would be subject to a fee of \$1,500 for each new car trip per hour that is generated through the triangle.

The state Department of Transportation has said the area needs \$3.5 million in road work to accommodate increased traffic from development.

Recently, City Manager Stephen J. Gunty said the ordinance has elicited a strong response from the public, especially from the business community. Earlier this month, Ellsworth Shopping Center owner James C. Van Loon Jr. called the plan "short-sighted" and urged the city to seek alternatives. The council met Tuesday to come to consensus on certain aspects of the proposal so that a future draft can address the concerns of the public and the council.

During the two-hour workshop, council members discussed several measures that might reduce the rates smaller businesses would need to pay. Among the possibilities are charging impact fees only from large developers, establishing a base number of traffic trips per hour and charging businesses for only those trips above the base, and exempting small businesses from the fee altogether. The council took no votes Tuesday.

The city is also awaiting information from DOT that might reduce the total cost of road improvements needed in the Myrick Triangle. The state is considering whether it would be possible to build Routes 1 and 3 in the triangle to a lesser engineering standard than previously suggested. If that is possible, it could lower the cost of the improvements, in turn lowering the amount of any impact fee, the city manager said.

"I would hope that in a two-week period we would have something more concrete in our hands," Gunty said.

Also Tuesday, councilors agreed to drop from the proposed ordinance plans to use impact fees to improve the city's sewer treatment facility. Instead, councilors said they would like to consider a sewer connection fee in the future.

Bangor Publishing Company
www.bangornews.com/