



Berlin Officials Settle On \$2K Impact Fee

Mallory Panuska

Staff Writer

12/01/2005 BERLIN, Md. – Following Berlin officials’ approval of an impact fee on new development this week, new homeowners in town will now be forced to dip into their pockets and shell out an extra \$2,000 at the issuance of their building permits to help the town take a significant step toward managed growth.

After postponing the approval hearing twice to find the best possible rate for residents, council members approved the final impact fee request this past Monday at a flat \$2,000 per Equivalent Dwelling Unit (EDU) for new structures, which ended up being a \$500 reduction from the originally proposed rate.

“We came back at \$500 less than the original estimate,” said Council Vice President Gee Williams of the cost. “If anything, we tried to push it down.”

Impact fees are commonly issued within municipalities to aid with capital improvements on public facilities, with recovered costs aimed to benefit the governments they are compensating, which in Berlin is something council members believe is long overdue to help get a handle on growth within the town.

“It’s a new day. We’ve got to do something to bring up our finances in the town and this is the way to do it,” said Councilman Elroy Brittingham.

However, not everyone was quite so in favor of citizens financing the town through the new fees, especially not Berlin resident Gabe Purnell, who expressed significant concerns for the long-time tax-paying resident buying his or her first new home.

According to Purnell, there are residents who have spent years saving up to build their first home living in and paying taxes to the town who will now be forced to pay another \$2,000 when they decide to build. Purnell said it was neither fair nor justified.

“How do we justify this to first-time homebuyers who have lived here for years?” he said.

In response, Williams said that it is actually more feasible to implement the cost now on first-time homebuyers, for it will take the heat off ordinary citizens who are content with where they live to come up with the funds.

“The poorest people in this town have had to underwrite growth in this town. That to me, is criminal,” he said. “Maybe we can come up with some sort of mitigation to make up for it, but this is all we can do now to support managed growth and take the burden off of people in this town.”

According to Mayor Tom Cardinale, had this fee been implemented years ago, the residents would have been able to afford a new home much sooner, and by issuing impact fees on new development now, the future will be much more promising for residents.

“In my opinion, had we had impact fees five years ago, these same individuals would have been building that home sooner,” he said.

Also brought up at the meeting was the fact there is only 1,100 EDU’s left of the 3,500 permissible until the town reaches build-out, which should potentially bring considerable revenue into the town at \$2,000 a pop.

According to local developer Troy Purnell, who wants the Berlin Mayor and Council to annex the former Tyson Foods processing plant site into town limits so he can build a mixed-use development, the extra revenue from the town’s 1,100 remaining EDU’s should potentially bring around \$4 million extra into the town’s capital improvement fund.

All material copyright 2005 The Maryland Coast Dispatch, Berlin, MD. Questions, comments, contact us at editor@mdcoastdispatch.com