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Aldermen look to manage growth with new ordinances

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The Black Mountain Board of Aldermen discussed ways to manage and support growth at their February 13 meeting

The town's staff has predicted that the municipality will have over 600 new homes built in the area in the coming years. This sharp growth will strain the current infrastructure, from the increased demand on the water system to increased traffic congestion.

At Monday's meeting, the aldermen voted 4-1 to approve a Water System Impact Fee Ordinance that would charge individuals and businesses \$700 for a new tap connected to the Town of Black Mountain's water system. Alderman Rosalie Phillips voted against the proposal

"People on the current system have been paying in for a long time, paying for the lines, the rehabilitation of the old lines, the plants," Alderman Michael Sobol said. "For the people just coming into the system, we feel they should ante-up. We simply want to ask new residents to pay for their share."

During the discussion, the question was raised as to whether the new fee would hurt those developers looking to build affordable housing in the area.

"I oppose the new fee," Jerry Richard Hudson III stated, during public comment. "This fee could slow down new development, and hurt high density development and affordable housing. There should be a discount for anyone who is building affordable housing."

The aldermen asked Elizabeth Teague, the town's planning director, to call a special meeting for the town's housing commission on February 28 to find ways to adjust the fee for affordable housing. The new fee will be implemented on March 1.

"This impact fee would make sure that the new customers, the customers who need new water, would be the people paying for the impact fee," Bo Ferguson, assistant town manager, said.

Also at the meeting, the board of aldermen voted unanimously to require traffic studies for larger developments that will affect the traffic flow of the town.

“A developer building 10 or more homes would have to engage in a traffic analysis study,” Tony Caudle, town manager, explained.

The ordinance allows the town to ask for a traffic analysis study if a driveway will be used for more than 100 trips a day. The average single-family residence uses their driveway for between eight and 12 trips per day.

“We’ve all wanted to see some traffic studies to see how this growth will affect the community,” Alderman Joan Brown said. “We want these traffic studies before developers come in. This is the first time we’ve taken a stand on traffic analysis.”

Jill Jones, administrator of the Swannanoa Valley Museum, presented the town with a committee report from the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area.

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area is a federal government initiative to conserve and promote the natural resources and heritage of the 25 counties of Western North Carolina.

The counties of Western North Carolina have completed a plan to improve and promote the area’s heritage, Jones explained, and Buncombe County is applying for \$233 million to promote heritage tourism, including regional trail connectivity, canoe-kayak launches, and local museum expansion and development.

Also discussed at the meeting:

- The aldermen voted unanimously to spend an additional \$30,000 to complete the indoor sports facility at the old Clevenger property, for over-run costs and operation expenses until the end of the financial year.
- The Black Mountain - Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce and the Black Mountain Business-to-Business organization will be holding a joint “2006 Shopper’s Expo” on April 8 at the Owen Middle School.
- The Dogwood Lane Bridge construction will be completed in 60 to 90 days.
- The town awarded a contract of \$139,035 to Hobson Construction for the water line relocation grant project.
- The town has completed plans for construction of a new sidewalk along U. S. Highway 70, between Cragmont Road and the intersection with Old U.S. Highway 70.
- The board voted unanimously for the town manager to sign a grant application to the Land-of-Sky Regional Council for \$7,272 for general purpose funding for the town’s senior programs and activities.
- The town announced vacancies on the housing commission and the urban forestry commission.

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