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Town considers \$700 fee on new water service

By J.P. Kennedy
Staff Writer

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The Town of Black Mountain is anticipating significant growth in the next three to five years. The new homes and businesses being constructed in the area will require water, and the town is considering a new fee to pay for the expansion of the current water system.

"We used a recent estimate from the planning department that we expect 650 new water customers in five years or so," Bo Ferguson, assistant town manager for the Town of Black Mountain, said. "As we look to increase our water capacity, we are basing our calculation off of that projection."

The town is planning to invest significant funds to pay for the new water production. To cover the cost, the Black Mountain Board of Aldermen is considering a tap fee of \$700 for installing each new home or business added to the existing water system. This will be a one-time payment for access to the town's water.

Ferguson explained that the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources for the State of North Carolina designated that each customer must have a capacity of 12,000 gallons of water per month or 400 gallons a day. The town is looking for the total demand in water to increase by 7.7 million gallons per month or 260,000 gallons per day.

"Based on what our current wells produce, we need new wells in production," Ferguson said.

"We have been looking over the costs," Bob Watts, public works director for the Town of Black Mountain, said. "And we're always looking for places to drill new wells."

The funds raised by the proposed water system impact fee will be used to explore for new water and to install wells and connections to the current system. The capital will also fund the purchase of new water meters and new electronic meter reading equipment for the new homes and businesses that pay the fee.

Ferguson estimates that the town will need to drill seven new wells to find four wells to put into production.

Citizens who are currently on the Town of Black Mountain water system will not pay any new or increased fees for their service.

"I would stress that we are proposing to institute the fee so that existing customers don't have to pay to expand the system for the new customers," Ferguson said. "The only people who will pay the fee are those putting new water taps onto the system."

The proposal will be discussed at the February 13 Black Mountain Board of Aldermen meeting. If approved, March 1 will be the earliest date that the water system impact fee will begin.

Ferguson invites the public to speak on the subject at the meeting. The meeting will begin at 6 p.m. in the Town of Black Mountain Public Safety Building, 106 Montreat Road.

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