



Boardman considers new fee on businesses

By [Denise Dick](#)

Monday, April 19, 2010

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BOARDMAN

The township is looking for ways to ensure that developers or businesses that put a drain on resources help foot the bill.

One possibility is development impact fees on new or expanding businesses or subdivisions. These fees would be assessed to a property owner based on the projected impact the development will have on community services.

Administrator Jason Loree said the township has asked the Mahoning County Prosecutor's office to research such fees to determine whether the township should pursue them.

"We're a home-rule township," Loree said. "We can do a lot things that cities can do."

Loree said the township isn't singling out any company. But the idea was broached with WalMart officials who visited about a month ago to talk about expanding the Doral Drive store into a super store.

The company hasn't submitted any blueprints or plans to the township, Loree said.

Wal-Mart officials couldn't be reached last week.

A printout of police dispatch calls to the discount store shows 640 calls between January 2009 and last week. The calls include accidents, abandoned vehicles and fraud, but most are for shoplifting.

"Every time there's a shoplifting call there, we lose a police officer off of the streets for one to two hours," said Trustee Thomas Costello.

If officers respond to a private-property crash at the same time, that's another officer off of the road, he said.

"If we have six or seven officers on the road and two of them are there, that's a third of our department" that's on duty, on patrol at one time, Costello said.

The township believes that the owner should help pay for that, he said.

When Loree and trustees traveled this year to Columbus for the annual Ohio Township Association meeting, they spoke with representatives of other townships that use impact fees.

One of those townships is Hamilton in southwest Ohio, also a home-rule township.

That township enacted the fees in 2007 and the implementation survived a court challenge last year.

“The impact-fee amount is set by the new structures’ determined impact on the community’s roads, parks, police and fire services,” said Gary Boeres, Hamilton’s assistant administrator, in an e-mail. The determination is made by a professional study that examined the township’s current level of service on police, fire, roads and parks and then determining the new structures’ impact and cost on the level of service.

“The impact fee is based on the increased cost of the new structure to the township’s existing” level of service, Boeres’s e-mail said.

Fees are paid based on a set scale at the time an applicant applies for a zoning certificate.

“One of the most important aspects about impact fees that is often overlooked is the money from these fees is used to provide improvements, which could otherwise only be raised by additional tax levies,” he said.

Hamilton’s trustees have decided the township’s current level of service is well above average, Boeres said.

“New construction that impacts the community’s LOS should ‘pay its own way and not require existing residents to pay more taxes for improvements, which are required only because of impact to the roads, parks, police and fire services or if left unfunded, [would] further deteriorate the township’s LOS below an acceptable level,” he said.

All new structures except accessory structures pay an impact fee — residential, commercial and industrial, the e-mail said.

Since implementation, the township has collected \$1.5 million in impact fees. Money collected is divided into four accounts, one for police, fire, roads and parks.

Money collected in an account can be spent only on capital improvements and cannot be used for salaries or improvements in other areas.

Fees can also be applied to a company that expands, the assistant administrator said.

“There’s a percentage, and I believe that once a footprint is expanded 50 percent or more, that expansion is subject to the impact fee,” he said.