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Front Page August 18, 2005

Budget workshop focuses on impact fees Fees could pay for paving problem roads, services

The Baker County Board of Commissioners held a budget workshop Tuesday afternoon, that shifted focus from setting priorities for the coming year to reaching a consensus on impact fees. All five commissioners agreed on the need to implement fees as soon as possible. District 3 Commissioner Gordon Crews summed up the situation, "Something is better than nothing. Right now we are losing money every time someone walks into Bob Hathcox's office for a permit. Impact fees are a supplement and we need to get them in place and then tune them if necessary later."

All the commissioners stated their preference amounts. Chairwoman Julie Combs supports \$1,500 all for transportation only. Fred Raulerson has a figure of "\$1,500 to \$2,000 to get it up and running." Mark Hartley also wants the same to start. "My number is from \$4,000 down, totally with the school or whatever," stated Crews. Alex Robinson was for the highest starting point, "I would prefer to start around \$3000 or \$4000, with fees straight across the board whether it is for a conventional home or a trailer.

Following considerable discussion, four commissioners appeared to reach a consensus of \$1,500 to start, with a possible additional \$500 for the schools. That was amenable to everyone but Combs, "I am not committing any to the school without doing the sheriff, fire and recreation," she said.

Something is better than nothing. Right now we are losing money

Crews had numbers on the current rate of building permits that showed that the county would raise around \$1.65 million in five years at \$1,500. "We need to get it on the book now," he stated. At that rate county manager Jason Griffis estimated that one mile of dirt road could be paved each year.

The subject of paving was the focus of the priority portion of the meeting. Four roads are listed as most urgently in need by road superintendent Robert Fletcher including Reid Stafford, Bob Burnsed, Hills of Glen and Crews Road.

Combs also floated the idea of hiring three new road department employees as a shoulder work and prep paving crew. They could be used to clean outfall ditches and culverts. Her figures for the crew and equipment were a total cost of approximately \$280,000. The idea of contracting out the work was also covered.

Crews was in support of the proposal that would allow the county to create a regular road maintenance schedule.

Additional information and firm numbers will be brought to next workshop.

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