

For Wednesday, August 31, 2005

Local News

Builder: Triple the impact feesBy **Diane Strand**

The MidWeek

A DeKalb-area builder told the Plan Commission last week that the already tripled impact fees should be tripled again.

City staff have proposed that total impact fees be increased from about \$4,800 to more than \$16,800.

Steve Irving, who spent a summer on a committee that tried to package a school referendum, said the most important impact of growth is on a community's school system.

"I think the city's proposal is way short," Irving said. "Schools need the money now, not in seven years. The high school is in serious need of expansion. (Space at) Cortland Elementary School is inadequate. There are 1,000 homes platted (in the pipeline, but not yet built) in DeKalb. If you adopt the current proposal, it could be five to seven years before (schools) will get the money.

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to handle regional concerns such as major parks that would serve more than one community. Rubin said he "fully endorsed using impact fees" as they are proposed in the package developed by city staff and currently under review.

Rubin also suggested transfer taxes and proposed that they be kept in an affordable housing trust fund.

Rubin and Irving were the only individuals to speak at a hearing last week on residential development policies which include proposed impact fees and "residential development guidelines."

Acting Community Development Director Russ Farnum said, after the meeting, that he had met privately with builders and developers, who are interested in having more freedom and less regulation for their projects. Another meeting was planned.

Commission Chairman Rich Fassig continued the hearing until 7 p.m. Sept. 14. Any resident may attend and comment on the proposals.

Rubin also supported inclusionary housing, noting that many residents can't afford to buy \$200,000-\$250,00 homes that are being built now. He said there are inclusionary programs available, and the city should take advantage of them.

Farnum said, "It is important to have an open and fair community dialogue on these major policy changes."

"The current fee should be at least tripled. In addition, there should be a real estate transfer fee," he said. Such a fee is charged when existing homes are sold; however, the new fee would have to be approved by referendum. School officials are planning a construction referendum, though no date has been set. They would prefer no other issue on the ballot.

Irving's final suggestion was a sales tax for schools

Herb Rubin, formerly a member of the plan commission, offered a new suggestion as a long-term goal—"regional linkages"—

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