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County studying impact fees

03/08/05

Jeff Bishop

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The Gordon County Commission is considering the adoption of impact fees for new development, and a committee is being organized to study the issue.

"If we ever do it, we want fees that won't hurt the individuals that buy the houses," Alvin Long, board chairman, said.

Long said he has already floated the idea past the local homebuilders association, "and they are not opposed to this at all."

But Long said he has no illusions, predicting that this will be "a long process."

He said it could pose some legal issues, since impact fees have been challenged in the past. The idea behind impact fees is to offset costs to a community that result from development. Schools, roads, law enforcement, recreational and fire services, and other infrastructure must be provided, and all of these have costs, board members pointed out.

Board members recommended that County Attorney Suzanne Smith serve as a non-voting member on the committee.

Long said there is still some question as to how an impact fee schedule should be devised. A flat fee may be unfair since homes are of such varying values, he said.

"We don't want to hurt the poor," Commissioner Roy Davis said.

Board members agreed that the fees should not hurt homebuyers but should allow the county to recoup infrastructure impact costs.

"A lot of counties are looking at this," County Administrator Randall Dowling said. "We are not the only one."

Board members cited Cherokee County as an example of a community that's already instituted impact fees.

"We need some positive things to come out of this committee," Long said.

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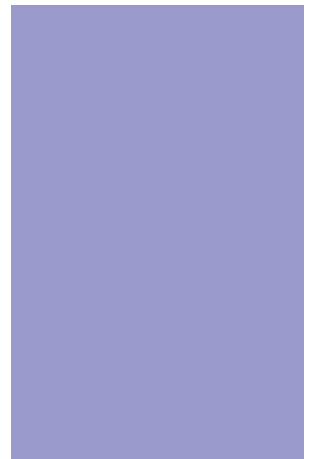
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