



Catoosa County Faces Budget Woes ***Commission Rejected Impact Fee***

by Neil Nadel

News 12

Wednesday, February 22, 2006

Catoosa County commissioners rejected an impact fee on developers by a four to one vote. The lone dissenter, Commission Chairman Bill Clark, says fellow commissioners missed a huge opportunity to cut the county's one-point-two million dollar deficit nearly in half. He claims it shows how deeply involved other commissioners are with developers.

"They sympathize with them and in some cases, they're mutually beneficial to each other."

"That is an absolute pipe dream," replies District 3 Commissioner Jim Emberson.

He says he- like the rest of the commission- just wants what's best for the county. He agreed with the idea of charging residential developers, but voted against the fee. Emberson says it would drive business and industry elsewhere.

"Why would someone want to come in here and pay impact fees on an industrial basis that would be rather substantial when they could go to one of these other counties and not have them.?" he explains.

Emberson admits he doesn't want to upset developers. But he wants to be fair to county taxpayers, too. That's why he's studying other charges for the home builders.

"Storm water fee increases, building inspection increases. And we're looking at zoning fee increases."

Emberson says that will help them in the short-term. But Clark says there are only two options for the long-term.

"We can either raise taxes or we can lower the services that we're providing," he says.

Commissioner Emberson says it's too early in the year to talk about that.

Jim Emberson added that the impact fee would be unfair because it did not include Ringgold and Fort Oglethorpe, Catoosa County's two biggest cities.

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