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City must make developers help with drainage

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The city of New Braunfels got some good news this week when a visiting district court judge ruled the city did not violate state law when it created a drainage ordinance that requires developers to pay a stormwater connection fee.

The fee is much-needed in a community that sees drainage issues, primarily flooding, as a major concern. With two rivers running through the middle of the city, flooding is a constant concern.

But flooding has grown progressively worse as the city has grown. Developers always have been required to mitigate increased water flow due to their developments, yet flooding has consistently increased.

In some neighborhoods, it only takes a major rain for water to flow into their homes. Many city residents have a set pattern when it rains — put out the sand bags and remove items from the floor.

There shouldn't be any debate about the need for funds to maintain drainage structures to mitigate stormwater flow in New Braunfels. How those new funds are derived is the question that was before the court, and that question likely will remain there for awhile since opponents of the drainage ordinance fee almost certainly will appeal the judge's decision.

Simply put, it is only fair for new growth to pay for the stormwater problems, and increased costs, new developments can cause.

But the stormwater connection fee is just a start. The fee will help the city maintain its drainage structures, but it cannot be used to build new ones. When discussing the court victory, Mayor Bruce Boyer said he was ready to propose impact fees that could be used to pay for drainage system improvements.

Impact fees are always controversial, but in New Braunfels, they are becoming more and more of a necessity. We applaud Boyer and the city council for showing the political fortitude to fight for the stormwater connection fees.

But, at the same time, we remind them that this one court battle is not the final step. Now development should pay for itself and for the impact it has on the community. It is the council's job to make sure that happens.

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