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City to delay applying for impact fees

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City council agreed Monday roadway impact fees were a good way to help alleviate some of the city's growing pains but decided they could wait until October to begin the process necessary to apply them.

By October, Planning Director Frank Robbins told council members the thoroughfare plan should be ready for review, a crucial assistant in determining which roads in areas of new growth might need improvement within the next 10 years.

Impact fees, charged on new developments only, are designed to mitigate the cost of improving roadways to handle increased traffic flows.

Councilwoman Gale Pospisil said she was not concerned the fees would stifle growth.

"People are going to come here whether we do anything about it at all," she said. "This is one way to help pay for it."

While the fees help pay for construction projects, they cannot cover the entire cost of the majority of projects necessary within the city limits.

The rest of the money likely would come from future bond issues, Pospisil said, even more reason to establish an impact fee.

"Impact fees will only supplement the costs, but I would rather go to the citizens and ask them to pay for 60 percent of a project, with fees from new developments paying the other 40 percent, than ask them to pay for the whole 100 percent," she concluded.

Once the city appoints a Roadway Impact Fee Advisory Committee,

consisting of seven members appointed by council, two members of the Planning and Zoning Commission and two members council members, the new group will be charged with recommending a consulting firm to define traffic study areas and establish a base fee per residence.

By law, the fee must be discounted to account for taxes paid. The adjusted fee is the maximum amount the city could charge per residence.

Fees are based on the roadway needs within a 6-mile wide and deep trafficshed and could only be used for projects within that area.

They also can be used to pay off bond debt on completed projects within each trafficshed.

Establishing impact fees puts the city on a tight timetable for completing promised improvement projects — if they are not started within two years or completed within five years, citizens could ask for a refund.

Robbins estimated the city would be divided into four or five six-mile wide and deep trafficsheds but noted several would not qualify for impact fees, being completely built out.

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