



Council approves impact fees for fire and police services

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The Fayetteville City Council approved impact fees for fire and police with a vote of 7-1 Tuesday night.

Ward 3 Alderman Bobby Ferrell cast the lone dissenting vote on the fees, which are intended to generate money to help cover the cost of capital needs caused by growth.

Ferrell proposed an amendment to the ordinance enacting police impact fees that would have sent the matter to voters at a Jan 10, 2006, special election. That amendment failed with a vote of 6-2. He argued that it would be prudent for the council to follow the guidance of City Attorney Kit Williams, who expressed concern over potential litigation.

Williams has issued several memos urging the council to refer the decision over impact fees to voters to insulate the city against potential lawsuits. The fees are permitted under a new state law that has yet to be ruled on by the Supreme Court, which could rule that the fees are actually taxes and must be approved by voters.

Ward 4 Alderman Lioneld Jordan cosponsored the ordinances with Ward 2 Alderman Don Marr.

The city already collects impact fees for water and sewer, which Jordan cited as a good example of how the city can raise money for capital projects without having to raise taxes. The water and sewer fees have generated about \$3 million in the two years the city has collected them, he said.

Ward 4 Alderman Shirley Lucas also expressed her support for the impact fees, noting that while a new fire station was finally built in her ward, response times are already approaching seven minutes, and another will be needed in the not-too-dis- tant future. Ward 2 Alderman Kyle Cook also supported the fees to help the city stop relying on tax increases to pay for growth. "The one thing we agree on is that growth is killing us on capital costs," he said. "We'd be foolish not to support impact fees."

Jordan noted that Fayetteville's impact fees are lower than those charged by other cities in the corridor.

Fayetteville's water and sewer impact fee is \$1,143, compared to Bentonville, which charges \$3,094, said Tim Conklin, director of planning and development management.

The differences in the fees charged by various cities can be attributed to the difference in capital costs the fees are based on, Conklin said.

The council approved a contract to increase the water and sewer fees at its Oct. 18 meeting to reflect the increased cost of the westside sewer plant, on which the fees are based. The fees were calculated when the plant was expected to cost \$42.5 million, though the cost is now slightly less than \$60 million, though the scope of the project has been reduced.

The police fees will be set at \$223 per dwelling unit for single-family homes; \$162 per multifamily dwelling unit; and \$605 per 1,000 square feet of retail/commercial development.

The fire fees will be set at \$208 per single-family dwelling; \$150 per multifamily unit; and \$457 per 1,000 square feet of retail/commercial development.

The council will also consider impact fees for roads after the council's Street Committee reviews the proposal. If the road fees are based on developers' continued donation of rights of way to the city, the fee would be \$3,443 per single-family dwelling unit; \$2,386 per multifamily unit; and \$4,0643 per 1,000 square feet of retail/commercial development.

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