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## Council stalls on impact fee ordinance

Despite a high price tag on future road improvement projects and expansions, Gillette city councilmen were not ready to move forward with a traffic impact fee ordinance Monday night.

It will cost about \$23 million - including design, construction and rights-of-way - to build streets that will accommodate future traffic demands in Gillette, said City Engineer Dan Roberts.

An impact fee - a fee assigned to each new lot that would be paid by developers - was suggested as a way to pay for those costs since the extra traffic will be coming from people who buy homes that will be built on the lots.

Roberts said the impact fees was a logical choice because money from the optional 1 percent sales tax will not be enough unless the city pays less for other projects.

But city councilmen weren't comfortable with the idea for several reasons:

€ URBAN SPRAWL: The fees would push development outside the city limits, where there would be no impact fees. That could have its own negative effect on traffic.

€ HOUSING COSTS: An impact fee would be passed onto homebuyers at a time when affordable housing is difficult to find in Gillette.

€ CONSISTENCY: Roberts suggested that an impact fee should include all developments, from large retailers to fast food restaurants to residential developers.

"It should be universally accepted or not at all," he said.

But taking away the chance to individually evaluate projects bothered some.

"It's difficult to have a policy that handles all situations," said Edd Collins, chairman of the Public Works Advisory Committee, which was not in favor of an impact fee.

Collins suggested encouraging developers to dedicate rights-of-way to the city. If

developers dedicate the right-of-way to the city, they would get compensated with a tax break, he said.

Councilman Tom Murphy Jr. said that each development has unique challenges. In some areas, road construction is easier and less costly than in others.

"The current constructability of roads need to be evaluated," he said.

Carter and Councilman Mike McInerney didn't like that fact that some developers, like IGC, already have had future impact fees waived. Since the city has already decided to allow some companies a waiver, Carter said he wouldn't support it.

"I don't think we can be picking and choosing," McInerney said.

€ RESPONSIBILITIES: Developers build their own roads, said Councilman Gary Carter. That has been common until recently, he said.

"I think the impact fee is a poor solution," he said.

€ ATTRACTING DEVELOPERS: Councilman Lee Wittler was concerned about impact fees would make it difficult to recruit developers at a time Gillette desperately needs housing.

"Given the current climate of the developers ... we need to fall back and regroup and study it some more," he said.

The ordinance will be put away for now, but could be brought back up in the future if needed, Roberts said.

By KELSEY DAYTON

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