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Front Page May 10, 2006

County ponders change to impact fees

By CARLA GWALTNEY OWENS Sentinel Staff Writer

County Manager Paul Leek asked the Clay County Water and Sewer Board of Directors to consider adopting an ordinance to change the way the Water and Sewer Department handles tap and impact fees for new construction. Martin and McGill Associates is currently looking at the way the fees are structured, Leek said, and will provide the county with information as to what the impact fees should be for new construction.

According to Leek, water and sewer tap fees are currently the only fees charged to new residential construction. However, occasionally these fees are waived for contractors who put in their own water and sewer lines.

The new rate system would include separate tap fees and impact fees, so when a contractor installs their own water and sewer lines and tap fees are waived, impact fees would still be paid. The impact fee schedule will be based on the impact new construction has on the county's water and sewer system. According to Leek, Martin and McGill are currently looking at the system's net assets and liabilities, among other things, to come up with an accurate rate structure. Leek said he hopes to have the new suggested fee schedule by July or August.

An ordinance would be necessary to legally change the way the county handles assessing the tap and impact fees, Leek said. Members of the water and sewer board gave Leek the go ahead to have Martin and McGill complete the study and come up with the new fee structure and the necessary ordinance.

Also on Thursday, Water and Sewer board members signed a resolution requesting that the North Carolina General Assembly enact a \$1 billion bond bill during the 2006 session to "fund construction and repair of urgently needed water, sewer and stormwater facilities." The resolution also asks for the Governor and General Assembly to activate the State Water Infrastructure Commission to address the State's longterm water infrastructure needs.

Leek updated the board on the new receiving station under construction, saying that it is 95% complete.

Commissioner and Chairman of the Water and Sewer Board of Directors Stephen "Doc" Sellers asked Leek about the way loads are currently measured at the station. Leek responded, saying that there is no scale at the sight currently. Sellers suggested that a scale be placed at the station to weigh the loads brought in. Leek said currently it is up to the truck drivers to be sure they have a full load on their truck when they come in to dump because they are charged according to the size of their tank.

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"We don't have a way to measure what they are hauling in, so it's up to the hauler to come in with a full load," Leek commented. Leek also responded to questions

about security, saying that the station is surrounded by a chain link fence and is locked up nightly.

Members of the board signed DOT permits for the water line extension on Highway 64 east Thursday evening.

Leek brought to the attention of the board a problem that has been discovered by Water and Sewer workers. According to Leek, paving and boring contractors have been tapping into the fire hydrants in order to fill their tanks with water. Leek said that this is illegal and that it is happening more and more often. Leek added that the contractors are using drinking water that it costs the county to treat to fill up their tanks.

Adding that it is simply convenient for these companies to hook-up to the hydrants to quickly fill their tanks, Leek said it is stealing water from the county.

"It is theft," Leek c o m m e n t e d . "Contractors working in this area need to talk

to the water and sewer department before they use the hydrants."

Leek added that they have no way of metering the water they are using. Sellers told Leek that the department should do what is necessary to curb such activity.

On the Water and Sewer agenda was a request from Jack Cloer and Steven Grimm concerning a water leak on the account of Wilma Worley. The gentleman told the board that a leak had been repaired last year but the repair eventually failed. According to the men, the leak was eventually repaired by themselves and is no longer leaking. However, during the time of the leak a water bill for \$250 was received and they are asking for compensation.

Workers from the department have been to the site several times, the men added, and they came before the board asking for a resolution. Sellers told the gentlemen that he would talk to the water and sewer supervisor and would get back with them at the first of the week.

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