



County urges up-to-date data in impact fee projections

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Leader-Courier

9/20/2005 02:53 pm

Use of up-to-date information has been urged in considering projected growth in Lyon County's future, as impact fees need to be calculated as accurately as possible.

This was one of the bigger concerns voiced via County Commissioner LeRoy Goodman Thursday during an impact fee public hearing held at the regular meeting of the Lyon County Board of Commissioners.

The hearing was to consider adoption of land use assumptions within various County areas, which would then be used to develop a capital improvements plan (CIP). This would then be a basis for impact fee calculations.

Tom Pippin, of BBC Research and Consulting, presented the draft CIPs and projected growth numbers Thursday during the first of two required CIP public hearings. The second is slated for Oct. 20 while a required public hearing for projected land use is slated for Sept. 22.

Pippin explained the five-way sources used for a five-year projected growth for Lyon County included the County Assessor's Office, Nevada State Demographer and three national databases, including Claritas, PopStats and AGS, to estimate local growth into the year 2010.

Currently, the county sits at nearly 50,000 lots with 20,662 being households. Based on projections, Pippin said the estimate would be 31 percent change with an increase to 65,582 lots with 27,034 being households. He noted these numbers are conservative and are based on various factors.

If one were to look only at local statistics (i.e. Assessor's data and State demographics) one would likely see a much larger projected increase; however, Pippin said taking the national databases into consideration changes this. With outside data, one must assume the population boom might not last. He said this is a result of the "housing bubble" bursting subject to water availability, potentially increasing interest rates and housing costs exceeding affordability. For this reason, said three outside sources are not as "bullish" on Lyon are local stats.

Goodman depicted a different view saying BBC needs to assure the national databases have up-to-date information. With this he cited at least one meeting recently, which showed the U.S. Postal Service's data was largely outdated giving a false impression of where the population of Fernley would be in the next 20 years.

Pippin's information shows the County divided into four growth areas. These include Fernley, Central Lyon, Mason Valley and Smith Valley. In the Fernley area, he noted nearly 160,000 square feet of non-residential growth is projected in the next five years.

Goodman, referring to the need for updated information, said a national retailer is already planning to move into Fernley (see Wal-Mart story in the Fernley section), which would easily take this much space alone much sooner than five years.

Also, Goodman noted several industrial centers, including a Wal-Mart distribution center, going into Storey County, which would likely add to Lyon's residential growth. This and other surrounding impacting projects, including Lyon's annexation of Washoe County property near Fernley, need to be considered as well, he said.

County Commissioner Phyllis Hunewill concurred saying Smith Valley faces a similar discrepancy in Pippin's projection versus actual planned development. She said the projected 140 single-family residential lots within five years are already near with the currently planned 133 lots.

He said the five-way source could be eliminated, which could result in higher projects; however, the conservative projection based on both local and national sources appeals more to developers.

Commissioner Chairman Bob Milz said he believes the five-way source is appropriate; however, Goodman later noted they need all their data updated before making a final projection.

Overall, the collection of fees does not matter as they are based on a per-lot basis; however, the level of fees based on projected growth could cause some developers to cringe. In other words, one would not want to set the projection too high, base fees accordingly and then face developers in litigation as fairness issues arise.

Along these lines, Milz said he would like to see a "cushion" of some sort in place so the County does not impose fees for needed infrastructure and then see a decrease in growth. For example, if such a decrease were to happen, one could see infrastructure in place for a 500-unit subdivision and only 100 developed lots to help pay for said infrastructure bonding. Pippin said these types of issues are difficult to answer.

Lyon County School Superintendent Nat Lommori said he believes the boom will continue, as housing prices in Lyon, though relatively high, are lower than many surrounding areas. Lyon County Planning Director Steve Hasson later concurred saying, in regards to high numbers of Californians coming to Nevada, "I think they're all going to head this way."

Also, along the lines of growth increases/decreases, one noted Carson City's slow-down in growth. Developer Dwight Millard said it is not a question of growth as much as it is a question of land availability. He said Carson City is reaching capacity for new development whereas Lyon is not. Overall, he said impact fees are likely a "necessary evil" all developers in all areas will have to face.

Another question was the distribution of impact fees. Goodman said he does not want to see fees collected in one area and then spent in another. Pippin said distribution would depend on purpose of the fees. If it is a countywide use (i.e. sheriff offices), fees would be distributed evenly across the County. If it is a local road issue, fees would likely find their way to local distribution accordingly.