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County's fee plan may take another road

By **Cindy Wojdyla Cain**
STAFF WRITER

JOLIET — Will County Board member Cory Singer said it may be time for the board to bypass a special road impact fee committee that he thinks is dragging its feet.

Singer, R-Frankfort, who chairs the county board's public works committee, said the county board should approve a plan of its own. The fees would be paid by developers and could help the county improve roads in growing areas.

Singer said he was in his first term on the board when it first decided to explore impact fees.

"Two-and-a-half years later we're still goofing around with this," he said.

Singer made his comments at Tuesday's public works committee meeting.

The impact fee committee was appointed by County Executive Larry Walsh. Walsh, who was not at the committee meeting, said later he followed state law, which requires representation from a variety of governmental and private entities, in forming the committee.

Walsh said the county board may not want to wait for the impact fee committee's recommendation, but it should at least look at a plan it has discussed, which would carve the county into different impact fee zones. Using zones may be a more equitable way to implement road impact fees, Walsh said.

Ignoring the impact fee committee's input could lead the county board to adopt a "very unpopular" plan, Walsh warned.

Singer said the board will take into consideration the effect impact fees could have on development here.

"We are very conscious of the fact that if fees are too high, then we could lose projects," he said.

DuPage County reaps about \$2 million a year from its road impact fees, Singer added. Will County could gain a similar amount, he said.

Also Tuesday county board committee members:

- Learned that increases in the cost of the county jail addition will add \$650,000 to the county's annual bond payment, boosting the total payment to \$4.16 million a year. The jail addition was originally estimated to cost \$50 million but is now projected to be \$58 million.

- Discussed a plan to pay for renovations at the county-owned Sunny Hill Nursing Home, where bids for the work came in over estimates. Surplus money from the River Valley Justice Center could be used to make up the \$700,000 shortfall, said Paul Rafac, the county's finance director.

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- Approved road variances for a new Gas City on Laraway Road near the new Metra station in New Lenox and on Mills Road for Rendel's GMC.
- Announced that Brandon Road would be closed on July 22 and July 23 as BNSF Railway improves its rail crossing just south of the bridge over the Des Plaines River.
- Approved a 5-year, 30 percent tax abatement for Hickory Farms distribution center in the Cherry Hill Business Park in Joliet.

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