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Cumberland nears authorization of developer roadway impact fees

By SCOT A. PITZER - Times Staff Writer

A consulting firm has completed a Cumberland Township roadway analysis, municipal officials have announced.

Sixteen months ago, Cumberland launched a process to impose upon housing developers impact fees to lessen the cost of road improvements required by construction of residential neighborhoods.

Results of the second phase of the lengthy process — a roadway sufficiency analysis — have been documented, according to supervisors.

“We have received a completed report,” said supervisor chairman John Gregor.

Gregor said a public hearing will be held at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, June 27, prior to the regularly scheduled supervisors meeting.

In Pennsylvania, the practice of charging developers impact fees was enabled by the passage of Pa. Act 209 in 1990. But the only municipalities to authorize it, Cumberland officials say, center around the state’s urban centers to the east and west.

Cumberland was the first Adams County municipality to embrace the fees.

The roadway sufficiency analysis stems from Cumberland’s recently completed Land Use Assumptions report. Supervisors unanimously accepted the report in February.

According to the document, based on Cumberland’s current zoning and land development regulations, planning experts estimate by the year 2015, the township is likely to see growth in the form of 1,100 new homes.

Cumberland’s roadway sufficiency analysis, explained township manager Florence Ford, is another vital step in the 18-month Act 209 process.

“This analysis is all built off the Land Use Assumptions report,” said Ford.

At the public hearing to be held later this month at the township’s 1370 Fairfield Road municipal building, Cumberland’s Act 209 committee will review, and potentially authorize the report. Supervisors, said Ford, are expected to ratify the document that same night, or at another

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upcoming municipal meeting.

According to McMahon Associates — the firm hired by the township to conduct the roadway analysis — the purpose of Act 209 is to fairly share the cost of municipal transportation improvements between developers, municipalities, and the Pa. Department of Transportation.

The fees can pay for road construction specified in approved transportation capital improvement programs. In addition to construction costs, the fees can also be applied to right-of-way costs; engineering, legal, planning and debt service costs; and the costs of Act 209 roadway sufficiency studies.

A team of traffic consultants, said Ford, studied the number of trips that are expected to generate as a result of the township's forecasted growth, the roadway improvements necessary to accommodate that growth, and what those improvements will financially cost. A final impact fee rate will be determined by assessing the cost of road improvements required by the township's projected development growth.

The cost of off-site road improvements will be balanced against the amount of peak-hour traffic generated by anticipated developments, resulting in a per-lot fee charged to developers.

In February 2005, Cumberland hired a

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