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October 22, 2005

ZIONSVILLE

Planners approve building fees

Measure that would add \$1,862 to cost of permits goes to Town Council

By Kim Heusel

Star correspondent

A recreation impact fee of \$1,862 could be added to every new residential building permit by next July if the Town Council votes to accept a recommendation by the Plan Commission.

Planners voted 7-0 earlier this week to forward the impact fee proposal to the Town Council with a favorable recommendation. The council historically has followed the recommendations of the Plan Commission.

A report prepared by Mishawaka landscape architecture and planning firm Lehman & Lehman Inc., which was hired to work with the town on impact fees, projected that Zionsville could see 200 to 300 building permits per year for the next 10 years.

The Park and Recreation Board voted 5-0 earlier this month to endorse the plan, which recommended an impact fee of \$1,054 on each residential unit.

Based on projected statistics, Zionsville could have justified an impact fee as high as \$3,800, explained Lehman & Lehman president Charles Lehman. He said the \$1,054 came through discussions on the committee working on the plan, which included two local developers.

"Based on their input, they felt that \$800 to \$1,200 was adequate and appropriate," Lehman said, responding to Plan Commission member David Carr's question about how the figure was set.

Plan Commission members, however, felt the fee should be higher. The \$1,862 figure is the national average, Lehman said.

"I'm sure the development community would rather pay less than more," Carr said.

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"Personally, I am in favor of a fee that is higher than that (\$1,054)," said Plan Commission President Lana Funkhauser.

Impact fees can be used to pay for projects that will be needed because of future growth in a community. They cannot be used to pay for current "deficiencies."

For example, if it is determined that a community needs five basketball courts to meet its current needs, but only has two, it cannot use impact fees to pay for three additional courts. It must make up that "deficiency" before it can use impact fees to pay for additional courts made necessary by the growing population.

The Town Council will hear a first reading on the matter at its November meeting. It could pass an ordinance to enact the fees after a second reading at the December meeting. If passed, the ordinance will go into effect six months later.

At least one Town Council member, however, already has indicated how he feels about the matter.

"I implore you to act on this tonight," said Art Harris. "We've been two years getting to this point. There's no need to wait."

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