

Sandwich increases fees on new homes County's smallest cities collect more in fees than largest

By Dana Herra - Staff Writer

SANDWICH - The city council last week increased a spate of fees charged on new housing and used to pay for things like new city buildings and police and fire protection.

Mayor Tom Thomas said Sandwich will be increasing its flat fee per unit to fund municipal buildings, public works, fire protection and police. He said the fees hadn't been raised since they were implemented, around 1988.

"If you look at our police department, someday we're going to need a new building," he said. "You look at what it was 20 years ago to pay for labor and services, and you look at what it is today, and you try to bring things in line."

DeKalb County's four cities - DeKalb, Genoa, Sandwich and Sycamore - all charge builders impact fees on new housing construction, although the types of fees and their amounts vary greatly among communities.

Sandwich also collects flat impact fees for ambulance service and the library, and collects fees on a sliding scale for the school district. Altogether, a three-bedroom detached home in Sandwich brings in \$5,395 in impact fees.

None of the other cities collects fees to fund police, fire, buildings or public works. Genoa City Clerk Wendy Shaneen said most annexation agreements require contributions to support those services, but it varies from development to development.

"Usually it's something like \$100 a lot," she said. "But the last time, the fire department said they didn't even want us to collect anything for them."

Shaneen said Genoa collects impact fees only for the school and park districts. Like Sandwich's school fee, the fees are calculated on a sliding scale based on the size and type of dwelling. At a combined \$7,491.31 for a three-bedroom detached home, Genoa's school and park fees are the highest of those of the four cities.

In Sycamore, the city collects a fee to support the library as well as fees for the school and park districts. City Clerk Candy Smith said the total impact fees for a three-bedroom detached home in Sycamore come to \$4,024.50. Although the fees are not up for a scheduled review this year, she said she expects the city council to take a look at the school fee soon.

"They were reviewing them every two to three years, but with the jump in land values, the school board will probably be coming in soon and asking for an increase," she said.

DeKalb is the largest of the four cities, and has the lowest fees. The city charges sliding fees for the school and park districts, and a flat fee to mitigate traffic impact. Fees for a three-bedroom detached home in DeKalb total \$2,669.50. Acting Community Development Director Russ Farnum said builders also have the option of donating land instead of paying a fee.

"If a developer donates a school site in the development, they don't have to pay the school fee," he said. "If the project is too small to donate a site, then the developer must pay the fee in lieu of that chunk of land."

All four cities also charge fees for water and sewer connection to new construction; these were not included when calculating total impact fees.

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