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Stakeholders still wary of \$3,288 maximum fee

By Hannah Farmer
Staff Writer

Jim Duncan of Duncan and Associates attended the stakeholders meeting Monday night and gave a presentation of what impact fees are and why Cabot should adopt them in order to keep development coming into the town. Duncan said impact fees do not hinder the development of a town; they improve it and aid in the development process.

"They are coming into areas where there is a lot of growth," said Duncan about the impact fees. "They help the growth of the city."

The stakeholder committee is composed of elected officials, business and community leaders, representatives from utility and building industries, and other citizens.

Impact fees are not an impediment for move-up homebuyers, nor are they a barrier for affordable housing and Duncan also said that they are a growth tool. He said, "If you want Cabot not to grow then you should be totally against the impact fees because they aid in growth."

Some members of the stakeholder's committee were wary of the idea of adopting another amount to pay when building a house or business. These impact fees are going to be on top of the taxes the builders are already paying.

In his presentation of what the fees actually are, Duncan showed how the fees are split into categories such as; roads, wastewater, parks and fire. Then the total amount from all of those would be \$3,288 for an average single-family dwelling.

The committee had some apprehension to accepting that rather large amount of money and Mayor Mickey "Stubby" Stumbaugh said that \$3,288 as a max fee was a little steep for a single-family dwelling. However, Stumbaugh agrees that the fees do need to be instated into Cabot because the town is growing so fast the infrastructure cannot keep up with it.

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"If we don't do the impact fees, there is no way to keep up," said Stumbaugh. "My personal opinion is that the max fee is a little steep for a house that size."

"The city should be sensitive and phase the adoption of the fees," said Duncan. He said the fees can be overwhelming especially for the new homebuilders who already have their loans and everything set with the banks.

"To me it seems like you're saying to continue using what I was using already without paying the fee, only now they have the fees on them," said Cabot Homebuilders Association representative Danya Utley.

From the standpoint of a builder, Utley raised the question of "if builders have to pay the fees and then also pay taxes." She said the question is always there of when will fees stop being put on builders. After discussion and the committee members voicing their concerns, Stumbaugh said the committee needed to make some recommendations to present to the City Council.

Some different issues that came up during the meeting were the extending of the library and building a new fire station on the west side of town at Magness Creek. Stumbaugh said it is growing so fast in that area and there is no way the current station could handle everything in Cabot proper and on the west side as well. The committee decided that the library extension would be decided on a later date.

At the closing of the meeting there had been one recommendation made and it was on the fire department being put at 100 percent, meaning they wanted to have the full \$288 impact fee for the fire department. The fire fee is the smallest one and since it is badly needed they went ahead and agreed on that recommendation. However, this decision is not over yet, Stumbaugh realized the stakeholders did not want the total impact fees to be at the \$3,288 amount but wanted to go lower than that. Stumbaugh decided to call another meeting at a later date to give the stakeholders another opportunity to come up with the recommendations on the wastewater, parks and roads.