

Article Last Updated: 12/12/2005 11:55 AM

Straban Twp. wrestles with impact fees

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Evening Sun

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The Straban Township supervisors tabled a traffic study following public comment from residents over the report's ability to withstand a legal challenge.

The land-use assumptions report will be used to calculate traffic-impact fees the township would like to assess developers.

Residents had no problem with the fees, but wanted the supervisors to adopt new zoning regulations first and base a land-use report on the entire 34 square miles of Straban - not the 21 square miles currently reviewed in the report.

A land-use assumption map and report are required under the 1990 state law Act 209 in order to assess developers for the increased traffic on local and state roads. The report anticipates where major developments - such as a 2,000-home development near routes 15 and 394 or a slots casino near routes 15 and 30 - would build and the burden that new construction would place on roads.

Straban would be the first municipality in Adams County to adopt traffic impact fees on developers, though the fees are in the works in Mount Joy and Cumberland townships as well.

Resident Sharon Hamm, co-chair of the group Concerned Citizens of Straban Township, said the report was based too much on conceptual and fictitious development plans. Those plans ³rumored to be in the works² should not be included in the report, she said.

³We want this to happen, we're just not sure the report is valid at this time,² she said.

Project Manager Kenneth O'Brien, whose business, McMahon Associates, put together the report, said it was ³prepared appropriately.²

The report is expected to have assumptions about how land is developed, he said.

How much the township assesses a possible development would depend on whether it was residential or commercial and its conceptual size, O'Brien said.

The fee would be calculated per trip per day - so a 2,000-home development, such as Gettysburg Commons, might generate 2,000 trips per day.

Impact fees could range from \$200 per trip to \$3,000 per trip, O'Brien said, depending on the development. That means if Gettysburg Commons' impact fee was set at that high marker, for example, the developer might have to pay the township \$6 million in fees.

Chance Enterprises, who has proposed a slots casino in Straban, said Thursday it expected to owe the township at

least \$3.6 million in fees for road improvements.

Resident James Miller said if the land-use assumption report - based on draft-zoning rules not yet shown to the public - is approved by the supervisors, it would impact the public comment on new zoning regulations.

Township officials are currently working with a committee of 18 to adopt new zoning regulations by early 2006.

³If Straban Township citizens understand that draft-zoning standards are being used as a component of other township planning processes, they may feel they have little to no chance to contribute to the zoning-ordinance development process,² Miller said.

O'Brien disagreed. If there were changes that needed to be made to the draft-zoning map, the traffic-impact study could easily be updated to reflect it, he said.

³You can never definitively project what will happen,² he said. ³We¹ll continue to work with the township with this.
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