



Supervisors adopt legislative authority to collect impact fees

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VISALIA — To compensate for an increasing demand for new county public and traffic facilities, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday voted to adopt the legislative power to collect development impact fees within the unincorporated areas of the county and also within cities.

According to the two ordinances adopted, each of the eight incorporated cities in the county's jurisdiction, including Porterville, would need to pursue an individual agreement with the county for fee collection, and would be entitled to keep a percentage of administrative charges.

The fees for new development, however, are yet to be determined and will be set by the county.

Although these would be implemented several years down the road, as noted by Supervisor Allen Ishida, the money collected would go toward facilities for services such as fire protection, sheriff patrol and investigation, general government services and for projects such as new roads and bridges.

Tuesday's move came in a 3-1 vote, despite opposition from the Home Builders Association (HBA) of Tulare/Kings Counties, Inc. and from several cities.

Bob Keenan, the Home Builders Association president and CEO, told supervisors Tuesday that fee studies completed by the county were old, flawed, and inaccurate, and said that the county's collection of fees from cities is illegal. Additionally, Keenan requested the Board delay the item and place it on the same agenda as the adoption of the county's General Plan.

Supervisor Phil Cox, who cast the dissenting vote, said that moving forward with the Resource Management Agency's proposal was "a little premature."

Cox, who is up for re-election, referred to a memo he wrote to the board in March, where he reportedly proposed to delay the matter and work hand-in-hand with cities and the development community as studies and fees were developed.

Ishida said he agreed that the impact fee study was outdated, "done during the boom of construction" and that fees will need to be reviewed in the future before they are put in place. He added that Supervisor Steve Worthley had noted in a previous meeting that according to the 2010 Census, 95 percent of population growth occurring within Tulare County was within the eight incorporated cities.

"The county has provided public safety services for those people...if we just relied upon unincorporated residents to build these facilities, that's 5 percent of the total population in the county that the burden would fall upon," Ishida said Tuesday.

"I believe that these fees are extremely important to the financial health of Tulare County, and we need to go forward in adopting the ability to put these fees in place at some point in time, and, as we know, that point in time is in the future because of the economic downturn we're in today."

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