

For Wednesday, October 5, 2005

Local News

Sycamore OKs impact fee increaseBy **Dennis Hines***The MidWeek*

Members of the Sycamore City Council have approved to increase the impact fees for the Sycamore School District and the Sycamore Park District.

The council members approved two separate ordinances during their Sept. 19 meeting to increase the school district's impact fees and the park district's impact fees by 11 percent. Both ordinances were approved by a unanimous vote.

Earlier this year, members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Growth Management proposed increasing the impact fees for the school district and the park district, because the average price of developed land has increased significantly during the past year. The school district's impact fees were last increased in the winter of 2004, and the park district's impact fees were last increased in February.

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"There's essentially no change in how the fees are calculated, but there's several variables that affect the final fee, and one of those is the value of the developed acre of land, and that's what is triggering the proposed change," City Manager Bill Nicklas said. "The average value has increased more than 7 or 8 percent, which has been our average for the last four or five years."

Members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Growth Management also suggested raising the school district's impact fees to help them overcome a projected \$8.5 million deficit within the next 10

years.

Dave Shipley, school board member, said district officials support the city's proposal to raise the impact fees to help them overcome a projected deficit. He said the school district also appreciates the city for adopting an ordinance which limits the number of building permits that a developer may receive within the year, because that will help them plan for the increase in the student population.

"Controlled, well-paced growth allows the school district the planning time necessary to meet the future requirements of that growth... The management of growth upon the community and the school district can only be achieved through responsible foresight," Shipley said. "The school district appreciates the efforts of the city to assist in helping to offset some of the capital costs of additional facilities due to residential growth in the community."

Ken Andersen, vice president of the DeKalb County Building and Development Association, advised the council members to postpone voting on the impact fee increases. He said increasing impact fees provides less affordable housing for area residents.

"To continue to raise fees is just a vicious circle. Raising the fees will do nothing to help except to raise the cost of land, and next year, we will be back here looking at another 10 percent raise..." Andersen said. "When impact fees continue to rise, developers and builders pass those fees down to the consumer. This causes the cost of housing to go up without adding any real value."

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•Also during the meeting, the council members approved a motion to accept the bid from Stran's Garden Center and Landscaping to participate in the city's fall tree planting program. Officials from Stran's Garden Center submitted a bid of \$15,280 to offer their services for the program.

As part of the tree planting program, city officials pay 50 percent of the cost for residents to have a tree planted on their property. Residents may request to have two trees planted on their property as part of the program.

City Engineer John Brady said residents may choose from 11 different types of trees. He said residents may visit the city clerk's office to learn which types of trees are available. The trees may be planted in a parkway or in a homeowner's front yard. Orders must be submitted for approval by Oct. 7. Order forms are available at the city clerk's office.

Mayor Ken Mundy said he and his wife, Juanita, ordered two trees as part of the program several years ago.

"This is a great program to beautify our city," Mundy said. "Juanita and I have two white ashes in our front yard that were planted about 12 or 13 years ago. They continue to do well, and Stran's Garden Center planted them."

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