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Local News

Sycamore approves water, sewer impact hikes

By [Dennis Hines](#) for The MidWeek

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Sycamore city officials have increased water and sewer impact fees to help make improvements to the city's water and sewer system.

Members of the Sycamore City Council approved an ordinance during their March 20 meeting to increase water impact fees from \$299 per housing unit to \$352 per housing unit, for a 17 percent increase. The ordinance was approved by a unanimous vote.

City officials proposed to increase the water impact fees to help pay the cost to construct an elevated water

tank and a new well on the north side of the community. The elevated water tank will cost about \$3 million, and the new well will cost about \$1.75 million.

The council members also improved an ordinance to increase sewer impact fees from \$1,750 per housing unit to \$2,205 per housing unit, for a 26 percent increase. City officials proposed to raise the impact fees to add more capacity to the sewage treatment plant.

City Manager Bill Nicklas said residents whose homes are currently connected to the sewer system will not have to pay the impact fee increase.

"This is not a user fee. It increases the impact fee," Nicklas said. "The increase falls on the new users who are just connecting to the system."

The council members were set to vote on the ordinances during their March 6 meeting; however, Nicklas said he wanted to meet with representatives from DeKalb County Building and Development Association to give them an opportunity to express their views about the proposed fee increases.

Ken Andersen, vice president of the association, submitted a letter to the council members stating that he was not in favor of the increases to the impact fees.

"When is enough, enough?... Good city government cannot continue to impose higher fees without hurting the housing in their own community. If we continue to raise fees without regard to affordable housing, it will soon be non existent within the city of Sycamore," Andersen stated in the letter.

Fourth Ward Alderman Terry Kessler said she feels the impact fee increases are fair. She said city officials have been discussing the issue for several months.

"It's not like we reached into the sky and pulled out a number," Kessler said. "It was well thought out with discussions with the different departments within the city ... We try to keep it at a reasonable amount. It covers our expenses, and we don't pad it, and it will be re-addressed by, maybe, this council or another council in the future based on the needs and the cost. We will keep re-addressing this each time costs go up and expenses go up, and I believe the total water impact number and the cost is very accurate and represents what our needs are and how we meet those needs."

•Also during the meeting, the council members approved an ordinance to update the city's liquor code. The ordinance was approved by a unanimous vote.

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As part of the ordinance, the council members removed a provision that prohibited dancing in a licensed liquor establishments. The council members agreed that the provision was out dated.

The ordinance also removes the liquor district from the code. The boundaries for the liquor district must be changed every time a new liquor license is issued. City officials said the boundaries for the liquor district have been changed several times during the past few years. The liquor code still states that a licensed liquor establishment cannot be located within a 100 feet of a church, hospital or school.

The ordinance also eliminates a provision that states owners or managers of a licensed liquor establishment must live in the city of Sycamore. City officials hope that eliminating the provision will help attract more businesses to the community.

•In other action, the council members approved an ordinance to rezone several properties on North Main Street from heavy manufacturing to highway commercial business. The ordinance was approved by a unanimous vote.

Jeff Bridge, who owns property at 456, 502-504, 524 and 530 N. Main St., requested the zoning change. Nicklas said he agrees that area is more conducive for highway commercial business than heavy manufacturing.

"His proposal seems logical. This is a departure from a type of use that might of been prevalent back 100 years ago when that was primarily an industrial area, but it is no longer," Nicklas said.

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