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Washington Township debates best way to lower impact fees

Leading plans would shorten a planned relief route or revert to a previous figure

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WAYNESBORO, PA. — Two leading plans to lower traffic impact fees in Washington Township, Pa., would accomplish the cut by shortening a planned relief route or reverting to a previous figure.

Several residential and commercial developers have asked the township to lower its fees associated with new construction. Each “traffic unit” created by development in a designated geographic area generates \$3,147 for the township.

Developers say lowering the fee could jump-start growth.

On Wednesday, the township supervisors debated what would be the best method to lower the impact fees. They decided to convene an already established committee to make recommendations.

The supervisors have talked about shortening the length of Washington Township Boulevard, a \$16.7 million relief route being built north of Waynesboro. Designed to provide a new east-west route, the boulevard could be stopped at Pa. 316 west of Waynesboro, instead of Pa. 16, to lower the overall project’s price tag.

Lowering the cost could translate into decreased traffic impact fees, which are used to pay for the road, township officials said.

“It should come up with a new value, and it should come up with a new impact,” Supervisor Jeffrey Geesaman said.

The supervisors questioned whether they’d have to refund partial payments for people who paid a higher rate. Because development stalled, no one has yet paid the \$3,147 per traffic unit, but developers paid \$2,714 per traffic unit before the rate was changed in 2008.

“No one has ever paid in at the higher amount,” Supervisor John Gorman said.

Township Manager Mike Christopher suggested reverting to \$2,714 could prevent refund requests.

“I’d be surprised if you’d find another municipality that lowered its impact fee,” Solicitor John Lisko said, saying he’s been unable to find case law that could aid the supervisors in their decision.

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