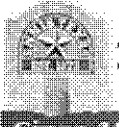




Ennis Chamber of Commerce

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Comparing city fees

Candie Beck-Adams, *Community Editor*
11-19-2008

Ennis 'fares' well against neighbor Ellis County cities

Development in Ennis has been the topic of debate recently with some questions being raised as to how difficult it is to construct a new development inside city limits and what measures the city of Ennis requires potential contractors and companies to adhere to. In a comparison with the cities of Waxahachie and Midlothian, there are many areas where costs in Ennis are significantly lower and also many more instances where Ennis does not require a fee while the other two cities do.

City Manager Steve Howerton said the city of Ennis does not require the same type of fees as the other cities even though the city wants the same development quality as both Waxahachie and Midlothian.

"Many of the development requirements produce large costs in Waxahachie or Midlothian; whereas Ennis has no, or lower, comparable development costs or development requirements," he said. "The city of Ennis strives for developmental quality equal to Waxahachie or Midlothian at the lowest possible cost."

In a comparison of impact fees between the three cities, Ennis comes out on top as the only city of the three to not have fees in the following categories:

For a single residential lot with a 5/8x3/4-inch meter Ennis has no fee while in Midlothian it would cost \$4,651 and in Waxahachie it would range between \$2,342.36 and \$4,684.52.

For a commercial property with a one-foot to four-foot meter the city of Ennis does not charge an impact fee while in the city of Midlothian it would cost a developer between \$8,139 and \$130,228.

The city of Waxahachie charges between \$5,855.65 and \$196,749.84.

The industrial impact fee has the greatest discrepancy between the cities with Ennis not having a fee and Midlothian charging between \$297,664 and \$697,650 and Waxahachie weighing in with fees ranging from \$117,113 to \$1,171,130.

A roadway impact fee, which is charged in Midlothian, is a fee developers must pay to drive on the roads and for a single-family unit it costs \$902. Waxahachie and Ennis opt to not charge that fee. For a restaurant, shopping center, office development and industrial development the fees in Midlothian range from \$10,684 to \$143,800.

An infrastructure inspection fee, which is paid to the cities that charge it to have their inspector check the ongoing construction, is not found in Ennis, but is charged in both Waxahachie and Midlothian.

For example, the Westbar development that will see an office building and a daycare facility built near the hospital in Ennis is a \$1.9 million development and would require an infrastructure inspection fee consisting of 3 percent of the total cost, or \$57,000, in Midlothian and is 2.5 percent of the total cost in Waxahachie, costing slightly less at

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Both Midlothian and Waxahachie have a plan review fee that is a fee paid to the city to look over the plans for the future development, while Ennis does not have any such fee. In Midlothian, the charge would be equal to 65 percent of the permit fee. In Waxahachie it is a cost of five cents per square foot of the proposed development. For example, the Sterilite Corporation is a 2.1 million square foot facility, which would have cost \$105,000 to review the plans for the property if built in Waxahachie.

Mayor pro-tem and long time City Commission member Bob Taylor said when the commissioners have talked about charging fees for various things, they have always decided against it.

"We just felt in order to make Ennis competitive with other cities we wouldn't charge those fees," he said. "We are doing fine without collecting the fees and it is more attractive to potential developers. It is funny because people think we are more restrictive in our requirements, but that isn't the case. We just want to remain competitive because Ennis is a great place to build."

A building permit that would cost \$424 for the first \$100,000 of development and then an additional \$2.25 for each additional thousand or fraction thereof would cost \$993.75 in Midlothian with each additional thousand priced at \$5.60. In Waxahachie the cost would be 25 cents per square foot.

A minimum fee for any permit in Ennis is \$10. In Midlothian it is \$23.50 and a significant jump to \$100 in Waxahachie.

In residential building developments, Ennis has no restrictions whereas in both Midlothian and Waxahachie no single architectural design may be repeated for consecutive lots on the same street. Also, there is a restriction on the number of houses that have front-loading garages in both Midlothian and Waxahachie, but not in Ennis.

All three cities require a minimum of masonry for single-family dwellings. Ennis has an 80 percent requirement while Midlothian requires 90 percent and Waxahachie 75 percent. While all cities have requirements on landscaping, Waxahachie is the only city that requires that no parking spot in a development be more than 64 feet from the trunk of a tree.

The differences in how all three cities charge for development and what they require is vast and Mayor Russell Thomas feels Ennis does not need such fees and requirements because they have planned and managed their growth well.

"We have long term physical responsibility and planning for infrastructure demands and we have managed it from within," he said. "It is only when progress and growth get out of control that people impose impact fees and our growth has been staying steady between three and five percent and we like it that way. It is manageable. There are a lot of things I'd like to see Ennis have, but I also want to make sure we are prepared for what we get and we anticipate the needs of the future before we allow rapid growth. We do everything we can to bring developments to the community and we always have, we think our stance on low or no fees comparatively is a great incentive to bring people in and we are pleased with the growth we have seen."

A full report on the comparisons between the cities, can be requested from City Hall, located at 115 W. Brown St.

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