

Impact fee increase first in 15 years

By Robert LaHue - Staff Writer
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"Inexcusable" is how Butte County Chief Administrative Officer Paul McIntosh described the county not having made any adjustments to the jail facility development impact fee since its 1991 implementation.

The county now needs to adjust the rate for 15 years of inflation, and at the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, the supervisors decided that, instead of raising the fee 36 percent in one shot, the catch-up will be done over a three-year period.

Development impact fees are paid to the county on new development to offset the cost of improving county facilities for new growth.

There are a number of different development impact fees paid for such projects as drainage in Thermalito and drainage in the urban area of Chico.

These impact fees are, under Butte County code, to be adjusted annually based on a construction cost index for San Francisco developed by Engineering News Record, a construction index publication.

These adjustments generally keep pace with inflation.

But, somehow, the jail facility fee was never adjusted for the last 15 years.

McIntosh said the jail facility fee was supposed to be adjusted annually, like other development impact fees. He has no idea how the jail facility fee was missed.

"It goes back to 1991, so it long, long predates me," McIntosh said.

Needless to say, when Senior Management Analyst Meegan Condon brought up the 36 percent increase in the jail facility fee it would take to bring the fee up to 2006 levels during the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, the board was less than thrilled.

The supervisors have to approve all development impact fees. Supervisor Bill Connelly said he wasn't happy about raising anyone's fees.

"Don't make us the bad guys," he said.

Supervisor Curt Josiassen then asked if the catch-up increases could be spread out over time instead of enacted at once. The supervisors, McIntosh and Deputy County Counsel Felix Wannemmacher discussed the board's option of gradually adjusting the jail facility fee while getting in accordance with county code.

The supervisors decided it would be best to catch the jail facility fee back up over a three-year period.

In order to have entirely caught up this year, the fee for a single-family dwelling would have to have increased from \$257 to \$349.79.

Instead, the board determined to raise the fee to \$288.

A multiple dwelling, which was at \$176 and would have been adjusted to \$239.54, was instead adjusted to \$197.

McIntosh said he prefers the multiyear adjustment because it eases the impact on the development community.

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The writer can be reached at rlahue@paradisepost.com.