



KALISPELL CITY COUNCIL

## Kalispell Council Differs on Road Impact Fees

By Dan Testa, 1-22-09

Kalispell City Council finally carved out some time at a Jan. 20 work session to discuss the highly controversial implementation of transportation impact fees. And based on the conversation, there's going to be a lot more talking before the fee report faces a vote.

Several council members expressed deep reservations about the plan. Councilman Bob Hafferman said the fees were too high, and should be reduced by about 75 percent, but the methodology to arrive at those fees was sound. Councilman Tim Kluesner, however, questioned the methodology, and disagreed with some of its conclusions, like whether a single family home generates more traffic than a rental property.

Council members were also vexed as to whether the road improvement projects listed in the report, which would be partially paid for through impact fees, were in areas affected by the growth and increased traffic generated by new development. The discussion frustrated some members.

"Bob (Hafferman) wants us to establish a new city policy to integrate into this and Tim (Kluesner) wants to throw out the report all together," Councilman Randy Kenyon said. "We're going backwards here real fast."

"We're just talking here, Randy," Mayor Pam Kennedy reassured him.

The council planned to continue the discussion at its Jan. 26 session.

**[End of article]**

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### **Comment By IsBobConfused, 1-22-09**

"Councilman Bob Hafferman said the fees were too high, and should be reduced by about 75 percent, but the methodology to arrive at those fees was sound."

So, if the methodology is sound, why are fees too high?

### **Comment By Dan, 1-23-09**

The methodology is the process or formula that is used to determine the number of people, or "trips", that it's estimated a newly constructed building will draw to it in a given amount of time, usually a daily time rate with peak hours that vary. The impact fee, or "development tax" as it really should be called because that's exactly what it is, is the dollar amount plugged into that formula. The method can be sound in it's trip determination but the dollar amount used in the formula can be set too high as Bob believes. Others on the council question the method but not the dollar amount. Go to the city website and read the study, the development tax applies to everyone, locals who want to build a business and have lived there all their lives, new industry or factories, new homes, and yes new retail. If the dollar amount of the tax is too high, and I'm not at all suggesting I know what that amount should be, those with the deepest pockets who can afford to pay will win and local mom and pop are out of luck. The majority of the local business community leaders are against the development tax for that very reason. The retail developers, local and otherwise, are against it because the dollar amounts are indeed pretty high, the methodology makes unfounded assumptions on projected traffic numbers and they have no assurances from the city that if they pay the taxes, the money will actually benefit the roads around their development and not be used somewhere on the other side of town. Keep in mind also that per the city growth policy new development of any kind already has to mitigate, i.e. pay for, traffic improvements needed to serve their property such as signals, additional lanes, new roads, etc. This new development tax is being asked for in addition to that. I know there are people who think their taxes are being used to help developers via infrastructure improvements, but they lose sight of the fact developers pay taxes as well and those taxes are also used for schools, parks, police service, etc... many things that benefit the whole community, not just the developer. Logical, sustainable and environmentally compatible "green" development with the least impact to the earth is what the city should be promoting, not higher construction costs through new development taxes because like I said, only the already rich will be able to absorb the cost. I suggest putting electronic traffic counters at all entrances to all developments, old and new, get a real count of their actual traffic and let them pay at a set rate per car. Results: your business doesn't generate a lot of

traffic, your development tax is lower. Your business creates a huge traffic jam due to high volumes of traffic, you pay more to offset it. Wow, a fair and logical solution! Nah, the city will never go for it...

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