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Kane board members fear county fee may be hurting development

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For The Beacon-News

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GENEVA — Kane County Board members are raising concerns that the county's impact fee on developers who bring in new businesses actually may be prompting businesses to move to other counties.

"I've received quite a bit of correspondence within my district," said board member TR Smith, R-Hampshire. "They're concerned this impact fee is driving business out of the county."

The impact fees were established in 2007, and needed to be renewed this year, by state statute. Because Kane is one of the few area counties that charge this fee, Smith said it could have a stifling effect on local business.

The fees are charged on a one-time basis to developers bringing new business into the county. Fees can be as high as hundreds of thousands of dollars for larger businesses, depending on projected traffic. It is a one-time fee charged to developers of both commercial and residential properties.

County Board Chairman Karen McConnaughay said that the fee was established at the height of population growth in the county in order to bring in more funding for roads.

The fees were intended to keep residents from assuming the burden of paying for the impact that new growth would have on the county.

While Smith said he is in favor of charging the fee to residential developers because of the new traffic that brings into the county, he said he does not favor the fee commercially because that traffic would still otherwise be there.

Executive Committee member Jesse Vazquez, D-Montgomery, suggested lowering the impact fee for next year to see if it does stimulate economic growth in the county.

Several members were concerned about the burden that it could place on taxpayers to fund road improvements.

"My fear is that this will go back on the residents and the taxpayers at some point," said committee member Barb Wojnicki, R-St. Charles.

The extension of the impact fees will be on the County Board agenda for Tuesday.

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