

Pitkin County mulls impact fee increase

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ASPEN – Construction costs may be coming down these days, but a transportation impact fee tacked onto the cost of building a home in Pitkin County may soon be going up.

County commissioners will review proposed new fees Tuesday that would generate a projected \$379,000 annually to fund road improvements, up from the average yearly revenue of \$321,000 produced by the existing fees.

The impact fees haven't been adjusted since 2000, according to Brian Pettet, county public works director. Since then, the cost of road construction has increased and the projects slated to be funded with the fees in 2000 have since been completed. With a new list of projects to tackle, it's time to update the fees, he said.

The old fees were applied to small, medium and large homes, but the proposed new fees would be applied on a sliding scale ranging from a home of 1,000 square feet of heated space to 5,800 square feet. In all, there are 25 categories of home size and 25 different fees for single-family home construction in the proposed new fee schedule.

"I think it's a more fair way to levy it," Pettet said.

The impact fee on a 2,000-square-foot home is currently \$5,664; it would jump to \$6,520 under the proposed new fee schedule. The fees are paid as part of the building-permit process.

The fee for a 5,000-square-foot home is currently \$7,818; it would increase to \$9,380.

While the county land-use code limits homes to 5,800 square feet, there are options to exceed that cap – through the purchase of transferable development rights, for example – and larger homes would pay a larger fee, Pettet said.

"It's a way to make sure growth pays its own way," he said.

The proposed fees were calculated based on both house size and the vehicle trips that homes of different sizes generate. Impact fees for multi-family, retail and industrial developments would also increase, but fees for office construction would drop by 4 percent under the proposed new fee schedule.

The fee revenues cannot be used to fund routine road maintenance, but must go to capacity or safety upgrades. On the county's list of future projects to be funded, at least in part, by impact fee revenues are upgrades to the Aspen Business Center road system, intersection realignment at Smith Way and McLain Flats/Upper River Road, improvements on Watson Divide Road and a new, wider bridge and realignment work on Snowmass Creek Road. The estimated total cost of the projects is \$12.4 million.

Pettet will seek direction from county commissioners on drafting an ordinance that, if adopted, would implement the proposed new fees. The discussion begins at 10:30 a.m. in the Plaza One meeting room.

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