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Officials, Wal-Mart developer disagree over transportation impact fees

By JIM HOOK

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WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP — Washington Township Supervisors and the developer of the Waynesboro Wal-Mart disagree over what the developer should pay in transportation impact fees.

A Wal-Mart and Lowe's are nearing completion at Washington Commons off Pa. 16 in Rouzerville.

Bruce Haney, vice president of development for Echo Real Estate Services, Pittsburgh, said he has three tenants for three outparcels — Applebee's restaurant, Sheetz convenience store and a bank which he declined to name.

Haney contends that his company's agreement with the township has already paid for the impact fees.

Supervisors, township manager Michael Christopher and township solicitor John Lisko contend that the three will owe a transportation impact fee of \$2,714 per trip added to afternoon rush hour traffic.

Haney said that because the transportation impact fee was applied retroactively to its adoption, the township can charge only \$1,000 per trip.

"My tenants won't pay," Haney said. "I'm not going to pay. That's not what the agreement states. I don't have the money."

The tenants, representing a \$5 to \$6 million investment and 60 to 80 employees, would not build if faced with impact fees, Haney said.

The entire development — the three outparcels, Wal-Mart, Lowe's and a couple of small shops — will add about 1,000 trips, according to Haney. The impact fee should be \$1 million, according to Haney.

Echo has spent about \$3 million on the first leg of the Washington Township Boulevard, a northern loop around Waynesboro. Echo also escrowed \$100,000 for a traffic signal and paid \$250,00 to the traffic impact fund.

Supervisors adopted a transportation impact fee in July to deal with the costs of road improvements from anticipated growth. No other township in Franklin County has imposed such a fee.

The impact fee, assessed to residential and commercial development, will finance construction of the \$10.5 million Washington Township Boulevard and a bridge and eight traffic signals along the boule-

vard. Most of the anticipated 1,500 to 2,000 homes paying the fee would be built northeast of Waynesboro.

The impact fee is to finance \$12.7 million of the \$14.4 million road improvement plan, according to a traffic impact study by Traffic Planning and Design Inc., Pottstown. Supervisors recently borrowed \$2 million to start road design.

Construction of the Wal-Mart and Lowe's began less than six months after supervisors approved the \$30 million plan for the shopping plaza, known as Washington Commons. Lowe's is to open on Jan. 20 with Wal-Mart following around June 1, according to Haney. Applebee's and Sheetz have submitted plans to the township.

Sheetz and the bank can be constructed in 90 days, according to Haney.

Together Wal-Mart and Lowe's will pay about \$100,000 a year in real estate taxes, 90% of it to Waynesboro Area School District, according to township manager Michael Christopher.

Construction on the road improvements beyond Wal-Mart is to begin in 2014, according to the transportation plan.

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