

Eastern Arizona Courier

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Update

City begins impact fee process for roads

By Jon Johnson, Assistant Editor

When new developments greatly increase the population of a municipality, who pays for the infrastructure to accommodate it?

Several Arizona cities and towns have enacted impact fees to assist handling growth. Safford has impact fees for water and sewer services, and now the City Council has begun the process to enact transportation impact fees, as well.

Dan Jackson of Economists.com gave a PowerPoint presentation on his company's transportation impact fee study for Safford at its council meeting Monday night. He briefly described what impact fees were and gave suggestions to the council based on the results of the study.

"An impact fee is a one-time charge paid by new development to finance the construction of new facilities needed to serve it," he said. "It is a process by which you get new growth to pay the cost of growth."

Jackson cited a transportation study by the United Civil Group and said Safford is predicted to see 102,378 new trips due to new growth in the next 10 to 20 years. A trip is equal to one vehicle driving from destination A to destination B. Jackson said more than half (59,342) of the trips would be residential based.

According to the UCG's study, the necessary road improvements will cost approximately \$35.6 million with about \$25.8 million attributable to new development.

If the city were to implement maximum transportation impact fees, the fee for new development would be \$2,416 per single-family home, \$1,697 per apartment unit, \$2.78 per square foot for office space, \$1.76 per square foot for industrial/warehouse space and \$10.84 per square foot for retail/commercial space.

Jackson said the fee for retail/commercial development is higher because they generate many more trips than an office or warehouse.

According to state law, an impact fee can not take effect until 165 days have passed after a notice of a public hearing is announced. The council must wait at least 60 days before having the public hearing. After that, it must wait 30 days before it can adopt the fees. Then the fees take effect 75 days after they are adopted by the council.

The council was unanimous in agreement to begin the process and passed a motion to have staff schedule the public hearing after the required 60-day wait.

Jackson, who is from Texas, joked that the time would be good for him since he would be in Arizona at the end of January to watch the Cowboys in the Super Bowl.

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