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Smyrna made poor deal on road work for two new schools

Oops, sometimes it doesn't pay to be too slick.

The town of Smyrna learned that lesson recently in its dealings with Rutherford County concerning road improvements for the Stewarts Creek schools.

Smyrna officials told the county it needed to pay a \$279,850 impact fee on the two new schools to handle road and other improvements.

That was a great deal for the county, which quickly agreed after some complaining that La Vergne waived its impact fees on school projects.

"Most of them (county commissioners) realized this was a good deal because we usually put millions of dollars into the roads," County Commissioner Anthony Johnson explained.

And that's true. The actual road improvements for the schools will cost \$6 million with Smyrna carrying the burden.

When it became obvious the improvements wouldn't be complete in time for the start of school this fall, the finger pointing began with Smyrna going back to the county and asking for more money. The commission correctly turned down that request.

Smyrna should have asked for the money up front instead of bad-mouthing county commissioners, even implying the schools might not be built to code, when it discovered the deal it put on the table was a little too sweet. Tough.

Rutherford County made a roughly \$30 million improvement to Smyrna when it built, equipped and staffed a new elementary and middle school in the Stewarts Creek area. Perhaps, the school board should have built the new La Vergne schools first? A valid case could easily be made for that scenario.

But that's neither here nor there, when you realize that the roads necessary for the two new schools won't be ready for the start of school this fall, regardless of whether the county decided to kick in another \$2 million. The earliest completion date is mid-October, two months after Stewarts Creek Elementary and Stewarts Creek Middle are slated to open doors to students in south Smyrna. That has parents hopping mad and they should be.

The whole affair is way too reminiscent of the foul-ups associated with Smyrna's Downtown Revitalization project and should raise a few eyebrows among the town's voters.
