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Smyrna impact fees could go up sharply

The costs associated with building a new home in Smyrna could go up, as the town of Smyrna is considering sharp raises in the impact fees it charges builders.

While discussing how to handle growth during Saturday's planning meeting, the Town Council voiced approval for an ordinance to charge 100 percent of impact fees designated for road improvements and parks.

An impact fee is a one-time fee paid before construction begins on a new home or business. That fee pay for increased demands on services caused by growth. A park fee is charged to new residential development, while commercial and industrial developments only pay the required fire and roads fees.

The town already has 3,500 residential lots approved for construction, and will need to pay for roads, parks and sewer service to those areas. In the coming years, Smyrna expects to build a 80-150 acre park on the west side of Interstate 24, upgrade its water and sewer plants and undertake several road projects to accomodate new residents.

The fee increase was recommended by Councilman H.G. Cole, who was re-elected to the council in November after a two-year break. Cole was on the council when the impact fees were enacted in 2000, and said people were affraid growth would slow down with their introduction.

"I heard all of the Chicken Little stories (when impact fees were adopted), and quite frankly, I was ready to hear them again. The needs of our community far outpace any damage or criticism I could get (for asking for this)," he said. "I believe in it. I believe we provide a good quality of life and I don't know how we're going to maintain it."

Mayor Bob Spivey said the council should consider carefully how to adjust the fee scale, as residential growth spurs the commercial growth Smyrna has become known for.

"Everyone benefits from the quality of life Smyrna offers, not just the newcomers. What affects residential affects commercial. If we run a \$12 million or \$15 million hotel off, we may have lost them forever," the mayor said.

Check back with dnj.com or read the Daily News Journal for further updates on this developing story.
