

# The Morning News

## Local News for Northwest Arkansas

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### Fayetteville Officials Look To Revive Road Impact Fees

By [Dug Begley](#)

THE MORNING NEWS

FAYETTEVILLE - Eventually all the data and files in a folder on Tim Conklin's computer will lead to something. Maybe even road impact fees.

The proposed fees remain a possibility 10 months after voters tied in a failed attempt to enact the charges for new construction meant to offset the cost of additional streets.

"We're pulling it together," said Conklin, Fayetteville's long-term planning and development director.

Conklin has a file on his computer titled "road impact fees" in which he is gathering data on fees in preparation for drafting an ordinance sometime later this year. Most of the research into road impact fees is completed, Conklin said. Discussions with Fayetteville elected officials, city staff and developers need to happen before an ordinance can be drafted, Conklin said.

"We plan on having a starting point for those soon," Conklin said.

The proposed fees would pay for road projects throughout the city. They would be assessed on construction, which fee proponents argue necessitates the road improvements. Residential and commercial growth in Fayetteville puts more cars on roads, requiring improved streets, advocates say.

Impact fees can only go so far to funding needed city projects, Mayor Dan Coody cautioned. The money raised by the fees must fund additional infrastructure, Coody said, not routine maintenance and upkeep.

"They supplement what we can do," Coody said. "They can't replace it."

Lioneld Jordan, the biggest proponent of road impact fees on the city council, said he's eager to get back to work on the fees. A delay over the winter as the council grappled with Fayetteville's 2008 budget and proposed water and sewer rate changes isn't a concern, Jordan said.

"We started talking about these fees in 2004, so waiting a year after April 2007 isn't bad," Jordan chuckled. "I think we are moving right along at Mach speed compared to what that was."

Getting to this point has been a wild ride, Jordan acknowledged. More than two years of discussions led to the April 2007 election where balloting was deadlocked at 2,015. Proponents claimed it was only fair to put some of the financial burden on development. A cadre of real estate agents, developers and business owners disagreed, fighting publicly against the proposed impact fees. A group, Citizens4Fayetteville, called the proposed fees "double taxation" on business.

Another group, Vote For Fayetteville, banded together to support the fees.

Because the impact fees did not receive majority support, the measure failed.

Jordan said had the vote been more convincing, he might have let the issue rest.

"But it was a tie," Jordan said. "So that's well worth bringing them back."

Concessions have been made along the way, Conklin and Jordan said. The original impact fee proposal did not alter the fee based on the size of the new residence or differentiate on how far the home is from Fayetteville's downtown.

Conklin said he is working on a tiered system taking home size and location into account in the fee structure. Officials are also exploring if other factors - like a home's energy efficiency - can factor into the fee calculation, Conklin said.

Interest in the fees remains high, according to Fayetteville's 2007 residents survey, released earlier this year.

Nearly one-third of respondents to the survey, administered by the University of Arkansas' Survey Research Center, rated planned and managed growth as Fayetteville's biggest priority. Of those, 31 percent said impact fees were the best way to handle the city's growth.