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City leaders talk impact fees

Developments would pay a percentage of fair market value for improvements to parks, public safety, etc.

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DAPHNE — The city may soon charge impact fees for new developments.

The city hired TischlerBise, a Bethesda, Md. firm that specializes in looking at the possibilities of impact fees, where they could be used and what could be charged.

The fee could be more than \$2,000 for developing one single-family unit, according to TischlerBise representative Yvonne Dawson.

An impact fee can be used to improve parks and recreation, fire, police and transportation, according to Dawson.

"You're making sure that your levels of service don't deteriorate," Dawson said.

The fee has to be used on capital expenses like new vehicles and buildings. It could free up other funds designated for those costs, Dawson said.

These fees cannot be used to correct existing deficiencies or for maintenance and operating expenses, Dawson said.

According to state law, the fees cannot exceed 1 percent of the estimated fair and reasonable market value, Dawson said.

Over the next five years, Daphne could collect almost \$4 million in revenue for these services: \$1.5 million for parks and recreation; \$882,000 for police; \$788,000 for fire and \$579,000 for transportation.

However, the money would have to be used within two years because of state legislation, according to Dawson.

Council members Ron Scott and August Palumbo voiced concerns about being able to spend the money within two years.

"It takes longer than two years to spend funds like that," Scott said.

The funds would be placed in different accounts, one for each category, Dawson said.

Only the amount collected for a certain area could be used for that area. Funds cannot be pooled together to pay for a larger project one year and then use the funds for a different area the next year, Dawson said.

In other business, two items concerning the budget were pulled from the agenda.

The first was the possible hiring of a part-time nurse, a position that would cost about \$4,000

more a year, according to Scott.

However, the part-time nurse would work 80 hours a month instead of the 13 hours a month that the current contract nurse works, Scott said.

The nurse would be housed at the prison where there is already an office set up for the contract nurse, Councilwoman Regina Landry said.

The nurse would work with human resources and the wellness of city employees as well, according to Councilman John Lake.

The second item pulled was the Blueprint for Tomorrow through the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce.

The city may contribute about \$35,000 toward the initiative, which aims to boost tourism as well as local business and education opportunities.

But with budgetary concerns, Council President Greg Burnam said he would like to see that amount cut in half.

With the budget as tight as it is, the amount needs to be looked at, and see if the amount was a contribution and not a pledge, Councilwoman Cathy Barnette said.

The City Council will hold a special meeting Monday to discuss the 2008 budget.

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