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Impact fees in Thompson's Station headed higher

City will keep residential rate static, boost cost for businesses

By Jamie Page
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Any contractor building a new commercial project in this town has always been charged the same impact fee, regardless of whether it was a small day care center or a busy convenience store/gas station.

But as this popular burg is poised for major growth, town officials say it's time to begin assessing a more realistic fee to developers to ensure that the town will be able to afford to deal with all the traffic new development will unleash.

The town uses the fee to pay for a share of the road improvements and other public infrastructure based on the impact a new building is estimated to create.

The Thompson's Station Board of Mayor and Alderman on Tuesday voted unanimously in favor of an ordinance to increase impact assessment fees for non-residential and commercial projects.

Currently, no matter if a developer is building a hotel, hospital, office building, shopping center, gas station or a restaurant, they all are charged an impact fee of \$1 per square foot.

The new ordinance proposes a list of nearly two dozen fees tailored for various land uses. Most of the increases are significantly higher. For instance, a new 4,000-square-foot fast food restaurant currently would pay \$4,000. Under the proposed fee it would rise to \$52,280, a more than 1,200 percent increase. The fee for a new four-story, 50,000-square-foot hotel with 80 rooms would rise from \$50,000 to \$74,400, a 48 percent increase.

"Some uses generate a lot more trips than others, and right now you have a use that generates 80 trips per square foot paying the same as one that generates five trips per square foot," Town Administrator Greg Langeliers said.

"We would like to leave the residential rates as it is. We believe it is in line with our neighboring municipalities. But the non-residential uses are not in line."

Mayor Corey Napier noted that with the completion of State Route 840 last fall, the massive Mars Petcare campus under construction, and the recent opening of the Shelter Insurance state headquarters, the town is continuing "to see a lot of interest in this part of the world ... we are getting hit up" and he believes the fees should be adjusted to prepare for a new wave of growth.

"We recently approved some commercial zones, some shovel ready stuff, and I think these fees will help pay for some of this growth," Napier said. "We can focus on some of these commercial retail concerns and it will help defray some of the road building and other issues we are wrestling with."

The tentative list of fees are likely to be tweaked to better reflect the town's exact road transportation funding needs at the Sept. 10 meeting, when the board will vote on the second and final reading of the ordinance, Langeliers said.
