

Published Wednesday, August 20, 2008

County to consider lowering impact fees

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The Times -Herald

The Coweta County Commission will consider making changes to the transportation impact fees to lower the fees, but it won't be done in time for the annual update.

The commissioners held a public hearing on the annual update to the Capital Improvements Element last week and were set to vote on it Tuesday night.

The commissioners had discussed removing two road projects -- totaling approximately \$25 million -- from the CIE, which is the list of projects that will be paid for out of impact fees. Commissioner Leigh Schlumper said the county's impact fees for transportation are so high they encourage annexation into the city of Newnan.

Actually reducing the impact fee will be a rather in-depth process that includes revisiting the methodology used to calculate the fees.

And there's just not enough time.

Coweta is required to review the CIE annually, though no changes actually have to be made. Once the commissioners vote on the update, the CIE goes to the Chattahoochee-Flint Regional Development Center to be reviewed by Chatt-Flint and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

Chatt-Flint and the DCA have 60 days to do the review.

Coweta must have the CIE updated and approved by the end of October or risk losing qualified local government status.

The loss of that status would mean that Coweta would not be eligible for state grants and programs.

Because of the timeline, impact fee consultant Bill Ross recommended that the commissioners "approve this as presented," said County Administrator Theron Gay, but inform DCA and Chatt-Flint that the county intends to make some changes.

The county can then start the process of revisiting the metrology and can change the CIE at any time.

The changes will require an ordinance change and public hearings, said Tavoress Edwards, Coweta's transportation planner.

The county's transportation impact fee program is set to collect money for some \$135 million worth of projects. Removing the two roads -- the extension of Newnan Crossing Boulevard to U.S. 29 South and the extension of Amlajack Boulevard to the Coweta Industrial Park on Ga. Hwy. 154 -- should lower transportation impact fees by almost 20 percent, Gay said.

The county is collecting transportation impact fees at 50 percent of the maximum allowed fee.

A motion to approve the CIE with the intent of making future changes was made by Schlumper and seconded by Paul Poole. The vote was unanimous.

Gay said that the county can begin the methodology process in the very near future. "We kind of indicated that to Mr. Ross, to bring it back as soon as we can," he said.

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