

# Debating the Costs of Growth

*Impact Fees: Debate Focuses on Issue of Fees for New Development*

Posted July 15, 10:35 am. E-mail this article to a friend.

**By Aaron VanTuyl**

For The Chronicle

With the prospect of school impact fees a possibility for Lewis County, the Centralia-Chehalis speakers, one on each side of the issue, Monday afternoon.

The fees are instituted to help districts accumulate money, through a one-time payment on school expansion and other eventual capital projects.

Marnie Allen, who handles legal affairs for Educational Service District 112 out of Vancouver, can help schools. She's worked with nine districts in Clark County on the issue. "Impact fees averages," Allen said. "They're not limited and narrowly construed to the impacts of just one district."

The ordinances that go along with the impact fees state that the funds must be spent with entire cost of a project, and can only be spent on capital facilities included in the six-year plan.

Developers, she said, actually preferred impact fees over project-specific mitigation because they are more predictable.

The most recent studies on Lewis County, she said, show that by 2025 the cities and county plan to serve an additional 25,000 people.

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Studies show that additional property taxes, she said, will not cover the necessary upgrades to infrastructure. Upgrades are more challenging for schools, as 60 percent of voters have to approve construction bonds. Even then, the amount of improvements is set by the voters. Taxpayers, she added, don't want to pay for public facilities that will accommodate future development.

**What Impact?**

Q: What

"It's a lot easier to get that support when new development is contributing to that cost," she said. "It's been my experience that the most equitable, predictable way to get new development to pay a share of that cost is through impact fees."

A: In the long run, it's paid for the cost of the transit facilities.

The fees in Lewis County would, likely, be between \$2,900 and \$4,900, she said.

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Terri Jeffreys, assistant director for tax and fiscal policy for the Washington Realtors, said that when it comes to impact fees the devil is in the details.

Q: Hc

The underlying question that drives the discussion, she said, is whether or not the growth will pay for itself.

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"Impact fee formulas don't always give credit to taxes and fees paid by growth, and revenue generated by that," she said. She cited sales taxes on materials as one example of the local benefit of construction, along with increased property taxes and sales taxes on the new construction.

The fees could also be a deterrent to potential buyers who, seeing the price tag a few thousand dollars higher, would look for that amount of added value in the home.

Q: W

"Impact fees add really nothing to the value of the property," she said. "In a very competitive market, that will be less of an impact on whether or not your housing sales will be affected. In a less competitive market, that will be a huge impact."

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Four school districts (Centralia, Toledo, Napavine, Onalaska and Winlock) are currently working together to establish impact fees in Lewis County. The city of Napavine passed an ordinance establishing a \$4,931 impact fee for development within city limits in August of 2006; the Winlock and Centralia school districts have also expressed interest on working with their respective city councils on impact fees.

In Thurston County, Tenino (\$1,859) and Rochester (\$2,180) have impact fees.

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About 100 people attended the Chamber Forum, held at The Aerie Ballroom.

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*Aaron VanTuyl covers education, economic affairs and religion for The Chronicle. He may be reached at 807-8237 or by e-mail at [avantuyl@chronline.com](mailto:avantuyl@chronline.com). Make sure to visit his blog, "VanTuyl's Views."*

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by **Concerned Citizen**  
July 15, 2:33 pm

I wasn't able to go the Chamber's exclusive meeting so I don't know if our Cou what our Assessor thinks of impact fees. She sure likes to adjust our taxes i impact fee already!

The Chamber is always good at presenting information about different stuff, bu is on these issues. We use to have a director that encouraged the chambe

positions. I may have disagreed with them but at least they were thinking and s  
a while. Why not I wonder? Is it time for another leaders

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