

[Print This Article](#)

AlyssaLaRenzie@forsythnews.com

Impact fees drop by half

Decrease delays some projects

Figures Forsyth County officials reviewed Tuesday show that impact fee revenues have dropped nearly in half from 2008 to 2009.

The fees, charged per square foot on new developments, fund public safety, library, administration and parks and recreation expenses for the county.

In 2009, the total revenue for impact fees was about \$1.04 million, compared to \$2.01 million from the previous year.

"Impact fee revenue decreased in 2009 due to a reduction in building permit applications," said county spokeswoman Jodi Gardner.

Last year's impact fee expenses, at about \$1.4 million, however, exceeded the revenue by about \$387,000. A large portion of the funding went to phase three of the Big Creek Greenway multi-use trail.

Previously collected fees covered that difference in expenses, Gardner said.

By the end of 2009, the fund balance for impact fees was almost \$12 million, with about \$8 million allotted to parks and recreation.

"You have to collect monies first before you build anything," said Jerry Kinsey, parks and recreation director. "With it being slowed down, of course those projects will be slowed down."

Fowler Park, including its planned recreation center and skate park, is a multi-million-dollar project in the works for 2010.

These projects draw money from sales tax, impact fees and the parks, recreation and green space bond, officials noted.

Several projects within that department have been pushed back to adjust for the decrease in fees and sales tax money collected.

The county's 2009 financial report will be available for review in the finance office Friday and a public hearing on the impact fee update will be June 3.

The hearing and approval are required for submittal to organizations that give the county access to grant funding.

County commissioners received the first look at the 2009 annual update at a Tuesday work session, as well as an update on sales tax projections.

Revenues increased in the first quarter of 2010 from the first quarter of 2009 for the 1-cent sales tax, known as SPLOST VI.

The voter-approved tax collection increased nearly 25 percent from the same time period in 2009.

The current projection for sales tax revenues stands at about \$128 million, putting the county \$32 million below its original projected low-end collection.

"Considering the slight increase in collections during the past six months," Gardner said, "it is reasonable to maintain \$130 million as a five-year projection."

County departments proposed cuts of about 17.5 percent to match the decrease in projected sales tax revenue.

Commissioner Patrick Bell felt that some departments should possibly take larger cuts than others, such as those that handle "quality of life issues."

Chairman Charles Laughinghouse thought the self-determined reprioritization of spending by each department would best allocate the available funds, adding that no one could have foreseen the economic changes when SPLOST was approved in 2007.

"The county, as well as most of its residents, have suffered from the economic downturn," he said.

RELATED CONTENT

Other action

Also Tuesday, the Forsyth County commission took the following actions:

- Set a public hearing for June 3 regarding a conditional use permit for a corn maze on 11.8 acres on a property adjacent to The Avenue Forsyth.
- Authorized public hearings for the planning commission on proposed Unified Development Code changes to initiate a 25-foot landscape strip in the county's opportunity zone near Ga. 400, as well as changing public participation requirements for zoning applicants.
- Accepted a bid to purchase two Ford Crown Victorias for the sheriff's office to replace two totaled vehicles. Wade Ford was awarded the bid at a price of \$44,674. The money will come from the county's vehicle fund and insurance money from the previous cars' accidents. The new vehicles also require \$23,310 in equipment.
- Note: All votes were 5-0 unless otherwise noted.

— *Alyssa LaRenzie*

<http://www.forsythnews.com/news/article/5119/>