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Locals weigh in on Kane County impact fee debate

By James Fuller

For Kane County Board District 22 candidate Bob Getz, the focus of Kane County's debate about impact fees should focus on comments like the one submitted by the Village of Hampshire in a recent letter.

"We feel as if we are at a competitive disadvantage when competing against our neighbors due to the impact fee in Kane County," Getz said Tuesday in quoting the letter. "If a 50,000-square-foot grocer can locate in Genoa or Huntley (the McHenry County portion of town) and avoid the \$156,550 in road improvement impact fees assessed by Kane, why would they develop in Hampshire?"

County board members have debated the future of impact fees in Kane County for several weeks now. That debate will continue throughout this month as officials have a variety of conflicting opinions about the fees. Kane is one of only two local counties — DuPage is the other — to charge impact fees on would-be development. The fees help pay for infrastructure projects caused by the increases in traffic generated when a new business or residential development comes to the county.

To Kane County Board member Bonnie Kunkel, the focus of the impact fee should be on known facts, not what-ifs.

"We should not be reducing the (impact) fees that we collect," Kunkel said. "By doing so, we are slowing down some definite road work in our county. By decreasing this fee, to think that that's going to change whether or not we get development, that's speculative. Giving up something that we have not developed an alternative financing source for to get something speculative, I think that's a bad idea."

Kunkel wants to keep the impact fees flat.

Board member Jesse Vazquez pointed out Tuesday that the county already allows for a case-by-case review of the fees, including possibly suspending them, for any would-be developer who wants to come to the county. "Our doors are open for discussion," Vazquez said.

Board members approved a staff recommendation on the fees Tuesday that would see them slightly decrease. But that recommendation will act merely as a placeholder to avoid a costly legal process of having to re-justify even the use impact fees in the county. The debate about the fee levels will continue later this month at the board's committee of the whole meeting.

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