

New impact-fee law takes effect in Chandler

by *Edythe Jensen* - Jul. 25, 2011 12:12 PM
The Arizona Republic

A new law limiting how cities collect development-impact fees took effect this week, but it's so complex that Chandler will have to hire a consultant to help with the reporting requirements, said city engineer Sheina Hughes.

"We know it's going to affect us. We just don't know how yet," she said of the law that took effect Wednesday.

It's one of the 357 measures passed by the Arizona Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Jan Brewer this year, many of which affect city operations. However, municipalities have until January to comply with most of the impact-fee law's provisions, and they can continue to collect the fees under previous regulations until then.

Chandler collects \$22,079 in impact fees on each new single-family home, an amount higher than other Southeast Valley municipalities. Mesa collects \$8,532 per house; Gilbert, \$19,684.

Homebuilders have for years opposed the fees as unfair burdens that increase prices. City officials argue they make growth pay for itself and don't strap existing taxpayers with expenses associated with expanding populations.

The legislation requires cities to change the way they collect impact fees and forces them

to give refunds to current property owners if the infrastructure that is the subject of the fees is not built within 10 years.

The bill also limits what cities can fund with that **money** and creates public-notice and hearing procedures to replace current systems by Aug. 1, 2014, or a municipality will have to stop collecting fees.

For Chandler, the 10-year limit is a stumbling block that could delay or cancel road and park projects that were postponed during the recession, Management Services Director Dennis Strachota said.

Some of the other laws that went into effect this week also demand cities' attention:

- Cities must provide a "tamper evident" envelope to early voters that include a warning that it's a felony to offer or receive compensation for a ballot.
- Cities will have less authority to remove political signs that violate municipal sign laws or placement rules.
- Cities can't pass laws requiring landlords to control **bedbugs**.

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- Cities can't go after owners of rental property with four or fewer units if the tenant does pay the **water** and sewer bills.
- Cities must make some changes in employee retirement benefits.
- Cities can't pass laws requiring fire sprinklers in new homes. Chandler had proposed one but scrapped the idea when the bill was passed this session.

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