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Oakwood to press ahead with impact fee study

City plans to redevelop downtown area

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Oakwood is moving ahead with plans to study development impact fees, which were once a popular item for governments grappling with the costs of growth.

The City Council voted Monday night to seek out proposals from consultants to conduct the study, a move recommended by the city's Development Impact Fee Advisory Committee.

"There are a lot of costs out there," City Manager Stan Brown told the council. "If we build everything that needs to be built to meet our vision here as a city, you're looking at tens of millions of dollars."

The city plans to redevelop the downtown area in stride with its long-range 2030 plan and that eventually will mean additional infrastructure, including roads, sewer and water, and a new City Hall and police station.

"Obviously, we would try to seek out every revenue (source) possible, from sales tax to (Georgia Department of Transportation) aid and grants," Brown said. "... One of the avenues we think that is worth looking at is development impact fees."

Impact fees, which developers pay toward infrastructure improvements, were once all the rage among county and city governments.

Gainesville and Hall County have them. Flowery Branch doesn't but considered them late last year before deciding that the timing - a down economy plus slow development - wasn't right.

"I know it's a controversial subject, but I think it's one we need to look at, the reality of it," Brown said.

Mayor Lamar Scroggs said he and Brown have discussed the matter.

"I think it would be good to go ahead and (seek the proposals)," Scroggs said. "To start with, I wasn't too much in favor of it."

But the study should at least provide "an overview look of what we're dealing with in (terms of) infrastructure and the cost of it," he added.

After the city receives proposals, "we'll be working with the advisory committee to make a recommendation on a consultant," Brown said.

Because the city is taking this step doesn't oblige the city to go forward with fees, he told the council.

"It may be that we want to collect a portion of a fee," Brown added. "There are a lot of variables

we can look at."

In other business, the council agreed to contract with Clough Harbour & Associates, a New York-based company, to draw up concept plans for a new road and grading between Thurmon Tanner Parkway and Allen Street.

The project is tied to talks about a new adult literacy center off Thurmon Tanner's new segment between Plainview and Mundy Mill roads. The four-lane segment is supposed to be completed later this year.

Oakwood, Hall County government and the Hall school system are working together on the project, with the hope of applying for a state Community Development Block Grant.

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