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Impact-fee changes will quiet critics of old system

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It probably seemed like the day would never come for some Kane County officials.

But after more than a year of study, the public hearing on the new transportation impact fees will take place at 7 p.m. Wednesday in Building A of the Government Center, 719 S. Batavia Ave., Geneva.

Transportation impact fees were enacted by the county almost exactly three years ago and were enshrouded by controversy from the beginning.

The county used nine regional zones as the basis for assessing the fees, and in some zones -- particularly in the Tri-Cities and Big Rock Township -- there were complaints they were out of balance. It would cost much more to develop in the Tri-Cities than in Aurora, for instance.

Officials in Batavia, Geneva and St. Charles complained that it would hurt their economic development, particularly in a place like Batavia near the border of the Aurora zone. The difference between zones shows in the fee structure, in which the fee for each single-family home built runs between \$156 and \$1,780, depending on location.

Under the new proposal, that range would be between \$1,619 and \$1,669 for each single-family home.

It doesn't take much to figure out that the fees now are higher. But the fact that the county now bases them on three zones -- simply north, central and south -- has made it much more palatable to local governments.

For that reason, as the public hearing takes place the county will hear testimony from many municipalities in the area in favor of the new system.

While some cities are unhappy with the priority of some road projects on the county's list of projects that are eligible for impact fees, they are happy that at least some of the projects are on a list at all. And the county will be happy to get the new fee structure in place and be glad the studying is over ... at least for a while.

The ordinance says the fees must be constantly reviewed, so it won't be long before it's back to the drawing board.

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