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Kane board divided over fees formula

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GENEVA -- The Kane County Board should vote this summer on a new formula for transportation impact fees that are higher than today's fees but balanced more geographically across the county.

Still, with a vote looming, board members remain split on just who should be paying the fees.

Transportation impact fees are charged to offset the cost of development's impact on county roadways. They are based on how much more traffic a development adds to the roads.

The fees range higher for commercial developments, such as a convenience store, which could have a fee as high as \$12,000, to lower for facilities such as a nursing home, which is a little more than \$300. Residential developments pay based on how many houses are in the development.

A straw vote taken at a committee of the whole meeting last week was 10-9 against exempting nonprofit organizations, such as the Urban League, symphony orchestras or community theaters.

Last week, the impact fee advisory committee, made up of board members, municipal officials, business people and citizens at large, passed a recommendation on to the county board with only small changes. The committee did not add any new exemptions to its recommendation.

The debate over exemptions for nonprofits has made for strange political bedfellows. Two of the strongest supporters of exempting nonprofits are board members Gerry Jones, an Aurora Democrat, and John Noverini, a Carpentersville Republican, who usually find themselves at opposite ends of the political spectrum.

"We as a county should be encouraging The Salvation Armys, the Urban Leagues, because these add to the quality of life of a community," Jones said. "I don't want to put it to counting the cars coming in and out of The Salvation Army."

Those opposing the exemptions said the fees should be charged based on the impact, not on the use of the development.

"If we exempt, we are subsidizing these organizations," said board member Bonnie Kunkel, D-Aurora. "If we are going to do that, we should do so directly, if we have the money, instead of messing with impact fees."

Board member Michael Kenyon, R-South Elgin, said the board probably could exempt any number of organizations if it considered the value of their use.

"It's to have them pay their fair share, for what they're bringing to the county," Kenyon said of the fees.

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