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Impact fee cuts possible

MARENGO – City Council members continue to grapple with a proposed annexation agreement with local developers seeking a 50 percent reduction in the city's impact fees.

At Thursday night's Committee of the Whole meeting, local school district leaders cautioned the city against the proposed reduction of impact fees.

Impact fees are charged to developers as a way to help offset the cost of infrastructure such as sewer, water and roads. The fees are collected by taxing bodies, including schools, park districts, libraries and fire protection districts. North Star Trust and Marengo Development LLC requested an agreement for an impact fees reduction for property known as Seven Oaks, which would be on Pleasant Grove Road, west of Route 23.

District 18 Interim Superintendent Jerry Trickett said reducing the one-time developer fees would adversely impact area schools, especially during challenging economic times.

Trickett and Dan Bertrand, superintendent of District 154, presented the council with a counter proposal for consideration.

Modeled after the county's impact fee schedule, their proposal offered a "compromise," Trickett said. For a three-bedroom home, the current impact fee to Districts 18 and 154 is \$8,120. Applying the county's schedule, the impact fee would be \$5,185. The developers' proposed reduction cuts the fee to \$3,779.

Lisa Trainor, a parent and former Marengo councilwoman, also asked the council to consider the future impact a fee reduction would mean for the city's future.

"As a parent of school-aged children, I can't tell you how important it is that we don't fail the schools," she said. "If parents don't move here because they think the schools are [struggling], then we're not effectively meeting what we want, which is development and growth."

After hearing comments from leaders of school Districts 18 and 154 and other residents at Thursday's meeting, the council decided to hold off on taking action on the agreement. Councilman Steven DiMaria said the discussion should continue at the next City Council meeting at 7 p.m. Monday at Marengo City Hall, 132 E. Prairie St.

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