

[Print Page](#)

Impact fees proposal moving forward

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SANDPOINT - Developers in Bonner County could soon be footing the bill for the impact their projects place on public infrastructure and services.

Bonner County commissioners agreed unanimously on Tuesday to seek proposals from firms which specialize in the establishment of ordinances requiring developer impact fees.

Commissioner Todd Crossett campaigned for the fees when he ran for the District 1 seat two years ago. The fees are intended to lessen the burden placed on government and taxpayers when new development occurs in Bonner County.

Although the composition of such an ordinance is pending, it is expected to address impacts on roads, law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire protection, parks and trails, and sewer and water infrastructure.

Crossett is calling on bidders to respond with modular proposals with each element priced separately, a method Kootenai County used in the drafting of its impact fee ordinance.

"It worked really well," Crossett said of the Kootenai County ordinance. "They were able to go through it based on their priorities and their budget, and decide what they wanted to focus on."

The price of the fees are yet to be determined.

Commission Chairman Lewie Rich hopes there's more than just a few consultants out there who specialize in impact fee legislation so the bidding process is competitive.

"What I was searching for is more people that can offer services in a real world of competition rather than, 'We're the only ones here,'" Rich said.

Crossett anticipates there will be a number of proposals to sort through.

"We're going to get good proposals on this," said Crossett, a Democrat who is expected to face Republican John Reuter in this fall's general election.