

Brunswick rejects impact fees for new development

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BRUNSWICK -- New developers in Brunswick will not have to pay impact fees to the city, although that may change in the next year or so.

Council members Tuesday evening rejected a proposal to consider impact fees that would pay for new water and sewer, parks and police services on any new residential development within city limits.

Councilman Jeremy Biser suggested the city include Brunswick Crossing if impact fees were adopted. Groundbreaking recently began on the development that could add about 1,200 homes to Brunswick.

Brunswick, which is home to about 6,000 people, could see its population rise by an additional 3,000 to 4,000 residents when the development is completed, according to a preliminary impact fee study the city commissioned.

Other council members didn't like the idea of including Brunswick Crossing in an impact fee proposal, saying the city had not imposed the fees on the developer when the new construction was approved several years ago.

To do so now, they said, would be a bit like going back on a promise. "I don't see where we should go back on Brunswick Crossing," Councilman Tom Smith said.

Biser said including Brunswick Crossing on impact fees would help Brunswick provide the kinds of services residents of that development may expect. "I'm interested that we address quality-of-life issues," he said.

"This should have been brought up six, 10 years ago," said Councilman Ron Bruchey. "A handshake is a handshake."

Biser lives in Galyn Manor, a smaller development built near Brunswick Middle School a few years ago. Impact fees would have helped the city provide more police protection and parks for residents of the nearly 300 homes in Galyn Manor, he said. "I would pay it if I could go back," he said.

Lawyers for Brunswick Crossing argued that the development has already paid its fair share in infrastructure improvements. Each new homeowner will be assessed about \$3,000 for water and sewer improvements to enable Brunswick's public water supply to handle the new residents.

The preliminary impact fee study, by the Rockville consulting firm TischlerBise, recommended new homes be assessed \$1,200 each in impact fees. "We're going beyond our fair share," said Dan Snyder, one of two Brunswick Crossing lawyers to appear before the council Tuesday evening.

Brunswick voters approved the construction of Brunswick Crossing in a referendum several years ago, but no impact fees were proposed at the time, said Brunswick Mayor Carroll Jones.

Biser said impact fees would ensure services are in place when the houses are built. Property taxes, collected after residents move into newly built homes, will mean residents will have to wait a year or two for some new services, he said.



Smith suggested revisiting the impact fees next year, for any new developments beyond Brunswick Crossing. TischlerBise would charge the city \$43,000 for a detailed study on how to implement impact fees. The firm charged Brunswick \$7,000 for the preliminary study.

"If it's not going to include Brunswick Crossing, it doesn't make sense to do it now," Biser said.

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