



## Calimesa officials considering lowering development fees

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CALIMESA - City officials are considering lowering development impact fees in order to stay competitive with surrounding cities.

In January, for the first time in 13 years, the City Council adopted development fees in seven categories including police, fire and drainage.

City Manager David Lane is now saying the fees are too high.

"I think the staff might've made a mistake when implementing the development impact fees," Councilman Jim Hyatt said. "When we approved it, we left it open for the staff to continue to work on this with the developers to make sure they were right.

"It was never intended to be written in stone, but now it has a life of its own and we have this controversy and there's some confusion between the council members on how the fees work."

The fees are charged to developers to pay for updates needed in the city when more homes

and businesses come in.

Not every city has the same categories. Some have more and some have fewer depending on the amount and types of development and industries that come in, Lane said.

And not every single development fee is comparable since some cities' fees on traffic, for example, might be higher, lower or non-

existent.

Before adopting the new fees, the city conducted a Nexus study, and based on the amount of development the city expected, staff came up with the fee updates.

"Many of the projects don't have to be built by the city because the developers will be building them," Lane said.

And that automatically brings the fees down, he said.

Though some developers were concerned with the high fees the city adopted, Lane said, the issue wasn't brought to the fore until a commercial developer showed interest in building a motel in the city.

The developer hesitated after comparing traffic fees in Calimesa to those in Yucaipa and Beaumont, where they are much lower.

Lane said Calimesa's traffic fees are

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Yucaipa's development fee for traffic is \$408 per 1,000 square feet. Beaumont's fee for the same square footage is \$69. But Calimesa's development fee for the traffic category is \$14,467, Lane said.

"If we wanted to attract high-end commercial projects, we needed to be competitive," he said.

Lowering the fees, Lane said, won't keep Calimesa from building streets and infrastructure necessary for new development.

"If the fees are so high that it causes commercial development to look in another city, we won't collect anything anyway, and nothing will get built," Lane said.

Councilwoman Joyce McIntire isn't happy with the idea of lowering the fees.

"Why are we considering lowering them after we had the study done? Some are saying that they're way too high, but I don't know who complained and how did this all get going," she said. "Are the developers complaining? Because Stater Bros. is coming and I haven't heard any complaints."

The council will review the fees issue during a special meeting this month or during the regular meeting in December.

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