



Antrim Township heads toward impact fees

By JIM HOOK Senior writer

Antrim Township is positioned to become the third municipality in Franklin County to assess fees on new development to offset the cost of road improvements.

It's too early to tell how successful Washington and Greene townships will be with their transportation impact fees.

"If growth continues as anticipated, we should be all right, even though it's slow now," Washington Township Manager Michael Christopher said.

This week Antrim supervisors agreed informally to move toward imposing a transportation impact fee around a planned extension of Grindstone Hill Road. They asked their consultants at Transportation Planning & Design, Harrisburg, to affirm the next step by their Feb. 12 meeting.

If Antrim supervisors decide to proceed with an impact fee, they will be locked into an 18-month schedule requiring a detailed transportation study. During the period, they can collect an interim transportation impact fee of \$1,000 per evening rush hour trip from new development within the seven-square-mile area.

The extension of Grindstone Hill Road was envisioned as a commercial strip paralleling Interstate 81 for three miles. The section from

Pa. 16 south to Leitersburg Road opened six years ago. The second phase, the two miles between Leitersburg Road and U.S. 11 at I-81 Exit 3, stalled. The unfinished road and commercial development became a township election issue.

Greene and Washington townships previously approved transportation impact fees and zones:

n Washington supervisors two years ago centered a transportation area around construction of Washington Township Boulevard, a northern bypass of Waynesboro.

n Greene supervisors less than a year ago covered the township with seven transportation service areas. Supervisors, however, deleted a major road project that would have connected I-81 to the Cumberland Valley Business Park.

Impact fees are based on evening rush-hour traffic that a business or home will add to the road system. One home adds one trip. The impact fee in Washington Township is \$2,714 per trip and going up. Fees in Greene Township range from \$1,008 to \$2,531 per trip.

The contractor, homeowner or business pays the impact fee when a building permit is issued for construction of a home or building.

A township calculates impact fees from the projected cost of specific road improvements needed in an area and the area's potential development. Transportation plans and fees can be updated annually.

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Washington Township experience

The Washington Township Transportation Impact Fee Advisory Committee recently recommended that supervisors increase the fee 16 percent, to \$3,147 per trip. After two years, it's time to update for inflation, according to Washington Township Manager Michael Christopher.

"Blacktop has nearly doubled as the cost of oil has increased," Christopher said.

The cost of road construction and rights of way also have increased, he said.

The township collected \$450,000 from impact fees last year, and all of it went to making payments on \$2.5 million the township borrowed to begin constructing the six-mile Washington Township Boulevard, Christopher said. The township has more than \$2 million remaining of the low interest 10-year Pennsylvania Infrastructure Loan.

Some developers have agreed to put in their portion of the road at their expense.

Less than a mile of the road, from Pa. 16 to Old Forge Road (past Wal-Mart), has been completed. The township has rights of way for the road all the way to Pa. 997 and is waiting for state approvals for a bridge over the east branch of Antietam Creek, Christopher said. Once the bridge is bid, the township will have an idea of where the project is financially.

Construction in the impact-fee area and

elsewhere has slowed in recent months and so has the collection of impact fees.

Greene Township experience

The Greene Township impact fees have raised more than \$140,000 for road improvements.

Greene supervisors in March adopted a \$12.8 million transportation plan and the fees to help pay for it. They also collected interim fees since October 2005 in anticipation of adopting the fees.

The validity of the impact fees was questioned when a proposed car wash and sandwich shop faced an impact fee that rivaled the cost of its land purchase in the Cumberland Valley Business Park. Estimates from three engineers differed by \$70,000 for the interim fee and \$240,000 for a full impact fee.

The developer, Patriot Real Estate, paid an \$8,000 interim fee, based on the seven employees expected to work in the businesses. (The full fee would have been about \$12,000 if the owner had applied after the impact fees had been adopted.)

"I was pleased and it seemed fair," said Randy Misner of Patriot Real Estate. "There was no way we could have proceeded at the original price they quoted us."

Misner has Greene Township approval for the project and expects to proceed in 2009.

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Greene supervisors have a pledge of \$300,000 from a state grant available through the Franklin County Area Development Corp. The money would pay for a traffic signal at U.S. 11 and Pa. 433.

\$63,160.

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"It's a very creative use of (military) base development funds," said L. Michael Ross, president of the development corporation. "It's a positive for Letterkenny Army Depot and Cumberland Valley Business Park. It's a traffic enhancement to Route 11. It takes a very dangerous intersection and makes it much safer."

The \$300,000 will be a credit that the development corporation can draw down as the township assesses the corporation for transportation impact fees in the future, according to Ross. The corporation previously has constructed shell buildings in the business park, and rented or sold them.

Other newcomers must pay the fees assessed by the township.

"Businesses in Cumberland Valley Business Park will be treated like any new business in Greene Township," said John Van Horn, executive director of business park developer Letterkenny Industrial Development Authority. "We have no special consideration."

Each of the seven impact-fee areas in Greene Township has a separate fee and list of transportation projects. The amounts generated last year in each area range from zero dollars to

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