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Impact fees among concerns

By *Vanessa White,*

Independent Newspapers

District 6 Councilman Scott Somers talks to a resident at his town hall meeting. Independent Newspapers/Vanessa White

The showing of seven residents for East Mesa's District 6 town hall meeting Feb. 13 was bleak compared to nearly 50 residents at the District 5 town hall meeting a week before.

"I think we have a good ratio of city staff to residents, about 10-1," Mesa City Manager Chris Brady joked to the crowd after a presentation on the city's history and budget.

Dozens of city employees set up booths in the cafeteria at Skyline High School, 845 S. Crismon Road, representing city departments like utilities, neighborhood services, fire, police, libraries and transportation.

While not many questions were asked during the presentation, the hot-button issue of impact fees did arise.

Earlier this month, the Mesa Building Safety Division presented Mesa City Council with proposed changes to development impact fees. According to Mesa Building Safety Director Terry Williams, the recommendations were based on findings of a consulting firm.

Developers pay impact fees when obtaining permits or water service and the fees help offset the costs of new growth to the city, Mr. Williams said.

"Impact fees are collected and utilized for infrastructure in new areas," Mr. Brady said.

There are nine impact fees in Mesa: water, wastewater, parks, cultural, libraries, public safety, fire, general government and storm drainage.

According to Mr. Williams, the consultant recommended an overall average increase of 65 percent, the majority of which will be water and wastewater; a reduction to cultural impact fees; and is opposed to creation of a road impact fee.

"We don't do a street impact fee. We require the developer to develop the street. We like this method because we pass that along to the developer," Mr. Brady said.





Mr. Williams said the potential fees for new single-family homes would total \$8,503 and apartments would be \$5,406. Fees for nonresidential buildings would be \$1,950 per 1,000 square feet.

Mr. Brady said increased impact fees will compare to other fees in the Valley and would be lower than fees in Chandler and Gilbert.

At the Feb. 20 City Council meeting, 57 E. First St., members are expected to adopt a notice of intent to increase impact fees. If council adopts the notice, they will set a maximum amount for impact fees. There would then be a 60-day review period, where citizens can review the proposals. After those 60 days, in May, City Council will hold a public hearing to adopt the new fees, which will take effect in August.

Bryan Raines, Mesa deputy city manager, said the full consultant's report is available on the city Web site www.cityofmesa.org.

After the impact fee question was addressed, attendees moved around the booths to ask questions. Departments did not give short presentations because of the small number of attendees.

According to Mr. Brady, there are more than 70 registered neighborhoods in District 6. The city manager encouraged residents to provide feedback on ways to improve the town hall meetings.

"We want to hear from you about ways we can make these better and reach out to you," Mr. Brady said.

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