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Library district pitches impact fees to county commissioners

BY KEVIN DUGGAN

KevinDuggan @coloradoan.com

The Larimer County commissioners say they would be willing to talk about imposing an impact fee on residential development to support the Poudre River Public Library District.

But first the district would have to show a clear connection between a fee and services residents living outside Fort Collins receive from the district.

The commissioners heard a pitch Monday from library district officials, who said an impact fee on new development similar to one charged by the city of Fort Collins would help the district fund the construction of new facilities.

The Council Tree Library, which opened Saturday in the Front Range Village shopping area in southeast Fort Collins, was paid for primarily through the city's impact fee, said Ken Draves, interim executive director of the district.

A county-imposed fee that would be designated for building future facilities in the north side of Fort Collins might be acceptable to residents of outlying areas, Commission Kathay Rennels said.

More information is needed on how much of a fee would be needed, she said.

"I do think we have to have a nexus, especially in areas where we already have library districts," she said.

Commissioner Steve Johnson said the district has done a good job reaching out to residents of rural areas who could benefit from Internet-based services.

A district proposal to set up a system to deliver and pick up library materials through kiosks in outlying areas would be a welcome service, he said.

"I think if people in the county start to see those kind of things available to them, they would be more interested and more receptive toward the idea of an impact fee," he said.

The district was approved by voters in 2006 to take over a library system that operated for decades as a department of the city of Fort Collins.

It is funded through a 3-mill property tax that costs the owner of a \$250,000 home about \$59 a year.

Fort Collins has charged an impact fee on residential construction for library services since 1996. The fee, which is based on square footage, averaged \$400 in 2008.

Over the years the fee has brought in about \$6 million. The annual take from the fee has ranged from \$250,000 to \$700,000, depending on the amount of residential development, said Jeff Barnes, the district finance officer.

In a meeting last week with Fort Collins City Council members, library officials were told the city would continue charging the fee if other jurisdictions within the district's boundaries charged the same fee.

Mary Atchison, president of the library district's board of directors, said officials are trying to arrange a meeting with the Timnath Town Council to talk about impact fees.

Timnath and Fort Collins are the only incorporated areas with the district, which covers roughly the same area as the Poudre School District.

Wellington and Red Feather Lakes have library systems and are excluded from the district.

Additional Facts

By the numbers

Residential development impact fees charged for library services:

- > **Fort Collins** - \$400 (average)
 - > **Loveland** - \$644
 - > **Boulder** - \$425 (detached home); \$275 (attached)
 - > **Johnstown** - \$137 (detached); \$109 (attached)
 - > **Longmont** - \$500 (public building fee that in part is for libraries)
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