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Thursday, April 24, 2008

Brunswick will study impact fees

by Connor Sheets | Staff Writer

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The issue of whether or not to levy impact fees against developers in Brunswick concluded at Tuesday council meeting after many weeks of debate, with the council voting 5-1 to commission a formal study.

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The lone dissenting vote came from Councilman Jeremy N. Biser, who was thwarted by his efforts to include Brunswick Crossing in the study.

The council debated when and how to fund the \$43,000 study, which will be prepared by independent consulting firm Tischler Bise. Councilman Tom Smith argued that the study should be included as part of the fiscal 2009 budget in order to keep the city from incurring an unbudgeted expense this year. Mayor Carroll A. Jones argued in favor of splitting the cost evenly between fiscal 2008 and 2009. Jones and City Administrator David B. Dunbar argued that the cost of the study could come out of reserve capital funds – not operation and maintenance. If such, the timing of the expenditure would be inconsequential.

“The source of the money is going to be the same no matter when you spend it,” Smith explained. “It’s going to be unallocated capital spending.”

Still, Smith insisted that he was more comfortable making the allocation in next year’s budget.

After several more minutes of debate among the council about other details of how to handle the study, the council was willing to compromise and proposed that the council pass the motion Jones had suggested.

Impact fees are charges which a municipality can levy against developers to help pay for improvements necessary by the introduction of new residents. Such improvements include new park space, greater police department capabilities, capital projects and any other spending that is needed as a direct result of new development.



Biser made a motion at the March 25 mayor and council meeting to commission an impact fee study that would include Brunswick Crossing, a 1,500-home development that recently broke ground northwest of downtown Brunswick. The motion was not

Other councilmen and the mayor argued then that because impact fees were not part of the original agreement with the project's developer, Pleasants Development, it would be unfair to levy them now. They also said that the development had already paid its fair share to help fund improvements including major wastewater treatment plant upgrades.

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