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April 07, 2008

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What's going on with impact fees?

04/07/08

By **CHARLOTTE PERKINS**

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The Chambers of Commerce in both Perry and Warner Robins, as well as realtors, developers and those in the building trades have been heard from on the subject of impact fees for Perry.

So has the advisory committee appointed by the Perry City Council, with the majority of that group voting not to have impact fees at all, and then – when asked for recommendations in the event that impact fees were imposed, made suggestions limiting the growth area where they would be imposed, and recommending only one new fire station and no parks. Listening to those groups, the impression might be that impact fees aren't going to happen.

Don't bet on it. The question of whether current property owners in the city should pay the whole cost of new fire stations and recreation (active) parks for areas of new growth outside of the Perry Parkway is still on the table.

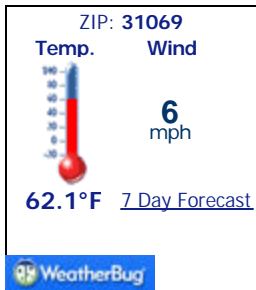
While those who would be asked to pay impact fees on new development, and the Chamber leaders who have strong business-related objections have been heard from, ordinary citizens who already have homes in the city have not yet been heard from on the matter of how much of the cost of new facilities for new growth they want to pay.

Nor have members of the City Council who brought the subject up for study and consideration made their final decision.

At Tuesday's work session, council members listened attentively to a detailed presentation put together by Mike Beecham, City Planner, with some input by City Manager Lee Gilmour in which a number of "administrative" recommendations were contrary to the Impact Fee Advisory Committee's recommendations.

The administration in addition to recommending the building of two new fire stations and one active park – as opposed to the advisory committee's recommendation of one fire station and no parks -- recommended a far larger Impact Fee District than the Advisory Committee had suggested. Beecham pointed out that the fee per home would be far less with the larger district.

Following the recommendation of the Impact Fee Advisory Committee that the



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impact fees only apply to a narrow area around the city which is more than five miles from the existing Washington Street Fire Department, the cost of the two fires stations with apparatus and one active park, the fee per dwelling to pay 50 percent of the cost was estimated at \$2,260.30 per dwelling, based on a growth of 98 houses per year; and \$3,631.15 per dwelling, based on a growth of 61 houses per year.

Following the administration's recommendation that the area beyond Perry Parkway be used as the Impact Fee District, the cost per home would drop to \$602.92 per dwelling based on an estimated 259 homes and \$963.94 based on an estimate of 162 dwellings.

In short, the larger the area subject to impact fees, the smaller the fee per home, per commercial building, and per apartment complex. Under the city's plan, the fee would be the same for houses of different sizes simply because, as Beecham pointed, out there is not a wide range of sizes, and the fire protection services would cost the same regardless. (Impact fees do not take into account the number of people in a home.)

The fees, which would be paid at the time that the developer or builder applies for a building permit, would be a one time charge, and city officials have made the point that while the cost would undoubtedly be passed on to the homeowner, the homeowner would have the long term benefit of better fire insurance rates due to the proximity of a fire station.

As for the operating costs of either the fire stations or parks, those would be paid for by all taxpayers. Once the agreed-on facilities were built and paid for, the impact fees would stop.

The other option, if impact fees are not put into place, is that current citizen and business taxpayers would be standing the whole cost for providing facilities made necessary by growth. The impact fees are to cover only 50 percent of the cost, and are not being imposed to include the additional costs that taxpayers are facing for new schools and highways.

Another public hearing is to be announced before the final vote on impact fees.



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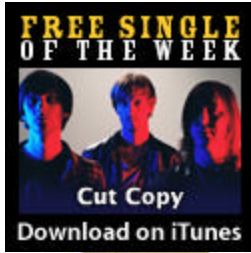
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