



Saddlehorn donates about \$40k to community non-profits

Self-Imposed 'Impact Fees'

By Keriann Lynch, 12-08-08

For years, the county has considered implementing impact fees on developers to help pay for public services stretched thin by growth. The partners for the Saddlehorn development in Bigfork charged themselves.



Last week, the Saddlehorn Foundation

Caption: Jim Augspurger works on reassembling an oak and stone cabin from the 1800s. - File photo by Lido Vizzutti/Flathead Beacon

donated about \$40,000 across 10 different local non-profits, including \$10,000 to the Bigfork Center for the Performing Arts for their remodeling efforts and \$14,500 to Community for a Better Bigfork for work on the Whitney Riverfront Park, sidewalks and a Bigfork recycling center.

In 2007, the foundation's first year, Saddlehorn donated about \$46,000.

"Flathead County doesn't have impact fees, but with the size of the development we felt we

should still do something,” Doug Averill, one of the development’s partners, said. When finished, Saddlehorn will consist of 320 residential lots on 800 acres south of Bigfork.

Averill and his partners began assessing what basically amounts to a voluntary impact fee, legally requiring 0.5 percent of each lot sold to go to the foundation. A board made up of community members then gifts the monies annually to local non-profits. The donations will continue in perpetuity – each time a property is re-sold in the future, the same percentage fee will remain.

“The money is generated even in a bad economy – like everyone else, things have slowed down but when momentum is gained again, it will bring all the more,” Averill said. “It will be millions over time, I think.”

County Commissioner Joe Brenneman said he didn’t know of any other development in recent county history that’s made donations on the same scale.

“We have developers say we’ll pay whatever we have to – when you get the laws changed so that we have to pay it,” he said. “Here, we have an example of a developer saying ‘I’m part of the community and I’m willing to help and share.’”

Other recipients of this year’s grants include: \$500 to Rotary District 5390 for bike paths; \$2,000 to the Ravenwood Natural Science Center; \$1,000 to the North Shore Nordic Ski Club for grooming and maintaining ski trails; \$2,700 to L.E.A.P. for Life for after-school program scholarships; \$500 to the Flathead Valley Ski Education Foundation; \$2,000 to Intermountain Children’s Home; \$2,800 to Bigfork Young Life; and \$2,000 to A.L.E.R.T. for air ambulance and advanced emergency rescue. **[End of article]**

Comment By Bobby Gee, 12-09-08

Wouldn’t it be wonderful, and neighborly, if Glacier National Park and Flathead National Forest were to provide impact fees to Flathead County to assist in dust abatement on the North Fork Road ? Both of these agencies attract nearly 40,000 vehicles using the road, and maybe more, during the months of June through September. The county claims it doesn’t have the money to properly maintain the road, yet it makes little effort to obtain funds. Maybe these agencies will follow the example of Saddlehorn.

Comment By whitefishman, 12-09-08

In a county with so much federal public land removed from local tax roles it would seem like they should “pitch in” for roads that service access to these lands, just as developers might be required to do. I think that’s why we have congressional representatives. Their help is needed to bring in funding directed at these roads on the periphery of the federal holdings. Our federal reps are not going to do it unless our county commissioners and state reps start pushing them for help. These lands serve many purposes and many people. Most of those who come to

Glacier Park are not from Flathead County. We need revenue to use for improvement and maintenance of these roads.

Comment By Northfork Freeloaders, 12-09-08

Why do the North Fork residents believe we owe them a paved road? They comprise less than one half of one percent of the population of Flathead County, yet they eat up nearly 9% of the county road budget. Does this explain why nothing has been done yet? We don't owe them ANYTHING. Get used to it, cheapskates. Pay your own way like the rest of us.

Comment By Roark, 12-09-08

“Self-Imposed 'Impact Fees'“

—I wouldn't pay \$1 dollar for a voluntary impact fee. What an oxymoron. Impact fee's are defined as a negative “impact” regarding said area. Well, who is to make that judgment? The whole idea is foolish.

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