

Impact Fees: Where is the Money?

It is just common sense that when development of any kind occurs there is a cost to the community. Traffic and road maintenance increase, fire and police protection costs increase. With more people, there is also a larger demand for amenities such as parks and library use. These are very real costs.

To help cover the increased costs due to development the Village has a tool called “Donation” or “Impact” fees. Impact fees are charges assessed by counties and municipalities to developers to recover the costs that future tax revenues will not cover.

In looking at the Village of Winfield building code it provides for charging impact fees for schools, parks, village services, library services, and other services. Like most villages, Winfield requires each PUD (Planned Unit Development) to make a donation of land or cash in lieu of for parks and school development. The amount of cash contributions is based on the “fair market value” of land and is determined by the village. Winfield values its land at \$75,000 per acre for cash contributions. Wheaton set the value of land at \$150,000 per acre. Carol Stream also set its land value at \$150,000 per acre. That means Winfield is receiving one half of what our neighboring villages get from a new development for parks and school site dedications.

Is the current Winfield Board obtaining the highest impact fees that could be charged? Look at the recently approved \$80 million development, Shelburne Farms on Highlake Road. This 30-acre site is being developed by David Russo and Creekside Partners and was recently approved by 4 (McClow, Levan, Mackowiak, and Bianco) out of the 6 Trustees. According to Winfield’s code on impact fees the Shelburne development should be charged \$12,000 or \$400 per acre for additional fire protection, \$14,400 for library services based on a conservative estimate of 600 new residents, and \$90,000 paid to the Village for additional village services needed. Also, according to the village code, Creekside Partners should have donated 3.3 acres of land for a park site that was not to contain or be adjacent to any water retention area. The annexation agreement with the board called for 3 acres of open/park land, which included the water retention area!

Creekside Partners will pay approximately \$600,000 for a school donation but according to village code they should also contribute 8.8 acres of land or \$626,250 for a combined school donation fee of \$1.2 million. All combined fire, library, village services and school the grand total should be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$1.3 million in donation/impact fees. According to the APA (American Planning Association) the local Chicagoland average for impact fees is \$9,425 per unit. For Shelburne farms, the impact fees should have been \$2.4 million based on this local average. Not only is the developer paying half of what the average is, he may also get the majority of this donation back after 20 years if not used for the purpose outlined in the village code! The bulk of the donation fee of \$1.2 million is for the school districts and shall not be used for any purpose other than for payment of the cost of school construction, expansion or rehabilitation.

This is NOT extra money to the village and clearly Winfield’s impact fees need restructuring so that they are comparable to surrounding towns. It is no wonder developers are choosing to build in Winfield. Now you know why residents have seen developers campaigning door to door with Chris Levan who is running for Village President.

We need to take back our Village and make sure development is beneficial to the entire community. Vote April 5th for Rudy Czech for Village President and Joel Kunesh, Christine Petitti, and Jack Bajor as Village Trustees.

Deborah Birutis
Winfield resident

