

**Kenny Howell**

*Managing Editor*

An impact fee on new construction was deferred Monday on its second reading.

The impact fee passed first reading on Nov. 14 3-0. It was \$1,500 per residential unit, and \$1,500 per commercial plus \$0.25 per square foot. The residential fee could have seen apartment complexes pay \$1,500 per unit, meaning a 400 unit apartment complex could have paid \$600,000.

Commissioner Ray Justice, who wasn't at the Nov. 14 meeting, voiced his opposition to the ordinance.

"This is the most cowardly way to collect revenue," said Justice.

Justice said it was unfair to collect money from a new person in the community when the others don't have to pay.

He also said that he had been told that we were ahead of the timeline on a new fire station on the north side, possibly 2014-15, but now he was being told that they won't be able to keep up.

Fire Chief Erron Kinney said the people that are already living here have paid for the fire department through the property tax.

“The citizens have already paid their fair share to get it here,” said Kinney. “The new people haven’t paid.”

Kinney said that over his years he has fought many fires, some of the worst he’s seen, at construction sites. Those homes will not have paid into the emergency services fund because property taxes might not be collected on that structure for over a year. Kinney said that strains the service on citizens who have already paid. He said the \$1,500 numbers was changeable and he knew when he saw the charge that would be levied on multi-family units that it wouldn’t work.

City Attorney Gino Marchetti said a study needed to be done to see what the impact was of the fee. That way the city would have definitive numbers of what was needed to handle the new construction that may come into the city.

“I can’t get the answers I need to vote on it,” said Vice Mayor James Maness. “We have to be able to justify what we are doing.”

The commissioners voted unanimously to defer the fee so Kinney and his team would have time to do more research and get concrete numbers on what the fee would need to be.

A moratorium had been placed on all new buildings permits in the City to keep there from being a run on new permits to avoid the fee. Commissioner Jim Bradshaw made an amendment to extend the moratorium, but it didn’t receive a second. The commissioners voted to remove the moratorium, 4-1.

Unless there is a pressing need, the commissioners will not meet again until Nov. 25 because the next meeting would have fallen on the Nov. 11 Veteran’s Day holiday.