



Township Impact Fee Study Comes In Way Under Budget

By Kate Andrews, The Record Herald

WAYNE HEIGHTS - Washington Township's impact fee study came in nearly \$37,000 under budget thanks to efficient work on all sides, according to Township Manager Mike Christopher.

When the township set out to do the study a year and a half ago, the price tag was estimated at \$245,000.

Although the estimate dropped to \$100,500 when the township switched engineering firms, no one dreamed the township would wind up paying \$61,005 to enact the fees, which already have brought in more than \$100,000.

Impact fees were paid by three commercial developments and one housing development before the township supervisors upped the fee from a temporary rate of \$1,000 to a final figure of \$2,714.

The fees, which are charged to builders in a seven-mile transportation service area, are used to fund transportation improvements. Washington Township plans to use the revenue to pay for construction of a relief route north of Waynesboro.

Builders are charged based on the increased traffic caused by their project.

Builders pay \$2,714 for each single-family home, slightly less for multi-family units and more for commercial developments.

'Absolutely worth it'

From the outset, township officials were warned that impact fees are expensive and complicated, which is why few municipalities in Pennsylvania have enacted them.

However, Christopher said the study was "absolutely worth it" and "fairly painless."

Christopher said that's because of the engineering firm, Traffic Planning and Design of Pottstown, which conducted the bulk of the study.

"I thought (TPD's engineer) Chad Dixson did a great job of explaining how this thing would work to our committee, to me and to the staff here," Christopher said.

"I'm highly recommending TPD for anybody else who wants to do an impact fee in our area," he added.

TPD's efficiency helped reduce the cost of its part of the study from its original \$80,000 estimate to \$54,296, Christopher said.

The efficiency and expertise of the township's impact fee committee also helped save costs, he said.

"The impact fee committee did an outstanding job of analyzing things and minimizing the amount of work for the engineer. They understood the information as it was provided and provided good information back to the engineer," Christopher said.

In addition, the township's project was more straightforward than some because the municipality knew how they wanted to use the money from the outset. The weather also cooperated, Christopher noted.

"The estimate included an average (number) of things going just right, but we never contemplated that everything would go efficiently," Christopher said.

Engineering firm Martin and Martin of Chambersburg, which conducted the land use report portion of the impact fee study, also came in under budget.

The firm originally estimated the report would cost \$18,000, but it ended up costing \$6,709.

Christopher said the cost was lower because of Martin and Martin's familiarity with the township. The firm serves as the township's engineer.