

Fee break seen as way to spur growth

Written by MARK JAEGER
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Lapicola says village needs to take lead in energizing housing market

Fredonia Village President Chuck Lapicola told the village's Economic Development Committee last week that it is time to become proactive in trying to bring growth to the community.

The mere fact that the economic committee hadn't met since January 2010 underlined Lapicola's point that little has been done recently to encourage local development.

He said he would like to shake that lethargy, calling for a meeting with developers and builders to brainstorm about ideas.

Lapicola said he already has one notion he would like the committee to explore — offering a \$2,000 reduction in impact fees for new home construction.

A new homeowner faces about \$2,800 in impact fees, including \$1,083 for parks, \$1,037 for water, \$366 for police and \$235 for fire services.

Lapicola said the money for the incentive could come from the village's Economic Development Fund, which has a balance of more than \$114,000.

"We could take the first step. By reducing our fees, it could encourage an electrician or other contractor to cut their fees and the developer could charge less for a lot, too," he said.

"We need to have something we are offering before we ask them to give up a piece of their pie."

Lapicola said the lost fees would quickly be recovered by the taxes the village could collect if a new home is built in the community.

Trustee Don Dohrwardt said the fee discount was worth exploring and not unprecedented.

"It is the same as what we do in the industrial park, selling land at a discounted price if they agree to build in our TIF (tax incremental financing) district," Dohrwardt said.

Trustee Scott Ehaney, chairman of the committee, agreed the fee discount was worth considering, but initially only on a 12-month trial basis.

Ehaney said the fee discount could be put into effect in January, so that it would be in place in time for the start of next year's construction season.

The committee agreed to outline the impact fee credit during a meeting with local developers and contractors, tentatively set for some time in September.

The committee also mulled ways to attract businesses and new homes to the village.

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“We need to get the word out that we are not a stagnant community. We are continuing to make improvements,” Lapicola said, pointing to plans for the reconstruction of Fredonia Avenue and enhancement of the park system.

“Fifty years out, I think Highway 57 will be our retail district and Fredonia Avenue will be a feeder street. If we could encourage just one new business to build in that corridor, it could be the first piece of the puzzle,” Lapicola said.

“I wish we could have attracted Walmart, but they decided to stay in Saukville. What we need to get is something that no one else in the area has, like a Dollar General discount store or a major truck stop.”

Lapicola said the village should also review the requirements it places on businesses looking to build in the community. As an example, he said it was “stupid” to require so much green space on lots in the industrial park.

“A lot of our ordinances need to be massaged to be more welcoming to business, while still not letting just anything go,” Lapicola said.

“I think we will can be successful at attracting business to our community by not trying to be Grafton and not trying to be Mequon — just being Fredonia.”