Needs assessment adopted by county

By Fred Couzens
Staff Writer

With newly sworn-in Clark County Commissioner Chip Maxfield calling it "an important first step toward growth paying for growth," the county commission has unanimously approved the Southwest Las Vegas Valley Public Facilities Needs Assessment.

Unlike impact fees that are assessed over a countywide area for water and sewer lines, the report calls for developer contributions applicable to their own projects – regardless of size – to help pay for that portion of parks, police and fire stations, and traffic signals left unfunded by other sources.

The assessment covers 39 square miles, principally in the unincorporated towns of Spring Valley and Enterprise, designated CD-3 (Community District 3). The land lies outside the urban growth boundary and without adequate services. The plan is designed to cover the area's infrastructure needs for the next 33 years.

"The primary purpose of the PFNA ... is to create an equitable method for distributing the cost of infrastructure on new development within the area," said John Schlegel, Clark County comprehensive planning director.

As such, use of the pre-determined cost figures by developers is voluntary, but not electing to use the county's numbers doesn't take the developer off the hook.

"Staff recommended that all projects go through the major projects review process so (developers) can use the PFNA figures or prepare their own cost assessment," said Walter Cairns, the county planner who has shepherded the plan for the past two years. "They can always apply for a non-conforming zone change and not be subject to the requirements."

The assessment was conceived as a result of a number of smaller projects wanting to "piggyback" off the infrastructure improvements constructed by approved major projects like Rhodes Ranch, Pinnacle Peaks and Southern Highlands.

Under six categories, individual assessments for each of the infrastructure categories – transportation, parks and public safety – combine for a total assessment per unit.

The cost per single-family dwelling is $467, for each multi-family unit the charge is $455, the retail cost is 24 cents per square foot of gross floor area, 12 cents per square foot for office, 10 cents for industrial and $104 for each hotel room.

For a proposed residential subdivision of 100 homes, the PFNA charge would amount to $46,700. For a 100,000 square-foot industrial building, that development would generate $10,000.

Payment of the applicable assessment fees for a project are due when building permits are pulled. According to Cairns, the building permit payment stage is a compromise time frame since, in the beginning, the building department wanted fees paid when final maps were approved while the home builders wanted to pay their fees at the time of occupancy.

All funds will be placed in a special interest-bearing account for each category.

The plan allows for a maximum 5 percent increase or 10 percent decrease in the cost units per year. Changes will be determined during the county budget review process.

Projects to be built with the PFNA funds will be determined as part of the county's annual review of its capital improvements program. As such, the funds can only be used for infrastructure improvements, not operations, maintenance or repair costs.

To date, 23 smaller projects have received conditional approval to participate in the PFNA program. Of the 23, nine are R-E rezonings to residential use, eight are R-E rezonings to commercial use, three are R-E rezonings to industrial use and three R-E rezonings to multiple district uses.

The largest project covered by the new PFNA program is Southwest Ranch on the Sunset Road alignment west of the Beltway where 4,516 units are projected to be built on 500 acres.