Commissioner Aaron M. Harrison opened the Public Hearing at 8:30 a.m. with commissioners Colleen M. Swedyk and Stephen D. Hambley in attendance. Mr. Harrison stated that the public hearing was for the purpose of consideration of recommended increases to building permit fees to be implemented by the Medina County Building Department. This was the first of two public hearings.

Chief Building Official Richard Nelson explained that it had been about seven years since the department had implemented a fee increase, and the last increase in 2018-2019 was moderate. Given the changing times, he believed it was appropriate to increase the fees more substantially now.

Mr. Nelson detailed the proposed fee changes:

Residential Fees:

- Base fee: increasing from $73 to $80
- Building square foot fees: increasing from $0.09 to $0.11
- Electric square foot fees: increasing from $0.07 to $0.09
- Mechanical square foot fees: increasing from $0.04 to $0.05
- Sprinkler square foot fees: increasing from $0.03 to $0.04

Commercial Fees:

- Base fee: increasing from $175 to $180
- Building square foot fees: increasing from $.11 to $0.13
- Electric square foot fees: increasing from $.08 to $.10
- Mechanical square foot fees: increasing from $.04 to $.06
- Sprinkler square foot fees: increasing from $.02 to $.03
- Alarm square foot fees: increasing from $.01 to $.02

Mr. Nelson explained the overall effect on typical projects:

- For a new 4,600 square foot home (including basement):

  Current fee: $1,250 - Proposed fee: $1,540 - Increase: 23%
- For a 2,300 square foot commercial project:

  Current fee: $1,300 (building, HVAC, and electric) - Proposed fee: $1,450 - Increase: 12%
- For a 30,000 square foot commercial project:

  Current fee: $7,800 - Proposed fee: $9,750 - Increase: 24%

Mr. Harrison inquired about how the cost of new construction had changed since the last fee increase, suggesting it had likely increased by more than the proposed 23-24% fee increase. He noted that for a smaller home of 2,500 square feet, the additional fee would amount to only $57 more.

Mrs. Swedyk highlighted that in the last six years, the department has experienced rising costs, which include salary increases for employees and higher health insurance expenses. Additionally, she mentioned the necessity of various resources to run the department effectively, which have become more expensive with time. Mr. Hambley agreed and explained that the fees collected do not fully cover the department's expenses. He pointed out that the county is, in fact, subsidizing the department, which is something that should be acknowledged - not all costs associated with running the building department are accounted for in its primary budget. Mrs. Swedyk noted that many cost centers necessary for the department's operations are not itemized within its direct budget but are housed within other governmental budgets, including the commissioners' and maintenance departments.

Mr. Nelson noted his concerns about the commercial alarm fee increase from $.01 to $.02 per square foot, which represents a 90-100% increase. He provided examples showing that for a building the size of Cloverleaf High School (approximately 150,000 square feet), the alarm permit would increase from $1,735 to $3,285. Mr. Nelson mentioned that the department had considered increasing the alarm fee by only half a cent instead of a full cent. However, it was noted that their clerk wasn't comfortable with that change, and the IT staff, including Keith who helps program their systems, expressed concerns about the half-cent charge potentially disrupting the software's functionality. He explained that despite the consideration, they ultimately decided against the half-cent increase to avoid complications in the system. He also stated that he some concern that there's going to be a little bit of pushback from an alarm company at some point in near future, although there is not many of them because there's not that many big projects with alarms.

Public Comment

*Jeremy Krahe, 387 Medina Rd.,* of Pulte Homes also spoke on behalf of the Home Builders Association ("HBA") noting that while some HBA members had submitted letters opposing the increases, the board consensus was that the residential fee increases were reasonable given the long duration since the last increase. He noted the fees were commensurate with those in other cities. For commercial fees, Mr. Krahe suggested implementing a tiered approach where the fee might drop back to 1 cent for square footage above a certain threshold, to avoid discouraging large businesses from coming to the county.

Mr. Nelson explained that the department already has such a system in place for large commercial projects, with a 10% reduction for projects exceeding 100,000 square feet and a 15% reduction for those over 150,000 square feet. He explained this was implemented about two years ago, recognizing that many large buildings are simple warehouse structures.

Adjournment

There being no further comments, Mrs. Swedyk moved to adjourned the public hearing; Mr. Hambley seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Roll call vote showed all commissioners voting AYE; the motion carried. The public hearing adjourned at 8:48 a.m.

Mr. Harrison noted that the second public hearing would be held on November 18 at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rhonda J. Beck
Clerk of the Board

COMMISSIONERS

OF

MEDINA COUNTY

Aaron M. Harrison

Colleen M. Swedyk

Stephen D. Hambley