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From The Morning Call

Officials agree to increase fees

Forks Township leaders raise prices of some services, add levy for transient retailers.

By Jeff Christman
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Supervisors retooled the fees Forks Township charges for services and added a new fee for retailers who set up temporary, often roadside, stores.

Supervisors adopted an ordinance setting permit fees for so-called transient retailers, the kind passers-by often see along roads selling fireworks, Easter flowers or Christmas trees.

The board set the fee at \$400 a month or \$100 weekly. The township already levies a \$25 per month fee for peddlers, such as those who sell items door-to-door.

Supervisor Chairman John Ackerman suggested the board consider banning transient retailers outright, but the board instead agreed to levy the fee.

Supervisors had considered fees for transient retailers from \$300 to \$500 a month, but agreed at the middle amount after some discussion.

State law sets the maximum a township such as Forks can charge peddlers, but no laws specifically address transient retailers, township solicitor Karl Kline said.

Kline said the law places limits on some fees, such as the peddler's permit, to prevent the permit fee from being used as a substitute for a tax or to drive the businesses out of the township.

Township manager Cathy Kichline also presented a fee schedule to supervisors including some revisions, she said, to reflect the cost to the township in providing the service.

The board agreed to increase a number of fees, including raising the cost of a bypass meter to \$110 from \$55 and increasing the cost to request a zoning variance hearing by \$50 for residential areas and by \$150 for commercial areas. Supervisors also agreed to double the cost of a copy of a police incident report to \$10 from \$5 and increase its fee for a pickup of a stray animal to \$30.

Supervisor Bonnie Nicholas said she had a number of questions regarding other fees, including fees charged to nonresidents using township facilities that were equal to the fee charged locals.

For example, a one-day pass to the township's fitness center costs \$5 for both township residents and those from out of town. Supervisor Donald Miller, however, said the one-day passes are an insignificant source of revenue for the fitness center. He said usually someone from Forks Township might buy a \$5-a-day pass before deciding to purchase the discounted \$20 monthly pass, which is much more expensive for out-of-towners.

The board agreed to review all the fees the township charges for possible revision at its December meeting to take effect in the New Year.

Jeff Christman is a freelance writer.

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