



City of Saco

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Memorandum

To: Mayor Michaud, City Council, City Administrator
From: Bob Hamblen, City Planner
Re: Requested Increase, Cost Recovery Ordinance Review Fees
Date: Budget Workshop Meeting, May 4, 2016

Mayor Michaud and Councilors, you are aware of the Cost Recovery Ordinance that calls for costs to be covered, but no revenue realized, from applicants with development projects. Whether a project requires Planning Board review, or is small enough that staff review is adequate, it is subject to a “deposit” rather than an application fee. The deposit covers the costs of staff’s review time, and of utilizing outside review that may include civil engineering, wetlands review, a traffic consultant, lighting review, landscaping for certain projects, occasionally a noise expert, etc.

The amount of deposits has not been amended for several years. The Planning Office took a look at several recent projects and determined that the cost of review exceeds the initial deposit amount for every project. This means that staff is spending time contacting applicants for more money, sometimes more than once for a given project.

Planning staff is recommending an increase in the initial deposit required for the review of subdivisions, site plans, and Site Location of Development review (those projects that trigger Maine DEP review, but for which the DEP has delegated review authority to the City, making for a speedier review with greater local control). See attached, suggested amendments to Section 83-3 of the Cost Recovery Ordinance, and, a chart showing recent development proposals, the initial deposit taken in to cover the costs of review, and the actual costs incurred for review.

It will remain that case that any application deposits that exceed the cost of review, or any funds submitted for inspection accounts during the construction of projects that exceed the cost of inspections, will be returned to applicants. Costs of review and inspection are covered, but “leftover” balances are not retained by the City – they are returned to the applicant.