

Gas fees help fund senior apartments

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By MARK MARONEY

Senior citizens looking for apartments in the city will have an option to choose from on Grove Street in about 10 months.

Ground was broken Monday morning on Grove Street Commons, a 32-unit apartment building.



Construction costs are estimated to be \$6.3 million, a portion of it funded by natural gas impact fees, said Michael Fisher, director of housing at SEDA-Council of Governments in Lewisburg.

The Lycoming County Housing Authority will manage the property, he said. The apartments will include the use of solar panels and have natural gas hook-ups, said Dennis Robinson, executive director of SEDA-COG. Two units will be reserved for handicapped individuals, Fisher said.

"We would not be here today without Marcellus Shale dollars," Mayor Gabriel J. Campana said.

A building permit fee for the project is estimated to be \$51,000, according to the city codes department administration.

Fisher acknowledged the work done by state Sen. Gene Yaw, R-Loyalsock Township, calling the lawmaker "chief architect of impact fee legislation."





Yaw said Lycoming County was "light years ahead" in its wise use of natural gas impact fees and was glad to see it accomplish the goal of fulfilling senior housing needs.

Marcellus Shale activities drove up rental rates when workers in the high-paying industry could afford higher rents, Fisher said. Results of a housing impact study done two years ago underscored the need for affordable senior housing, especially for those on fixed-incomes, he said.

toward construction costs.

Lycoming County Commissioner Jeff Wheeland said the county sees the need and is contributing more than \$1 million of gas impact fees

County contributions are broken down to include \$290,000 in impact fees and \$800,000 in funds it hopes to receive in additional impact funds from the state Housing Finance Agency.

State Rep. Rick Mirabito, D-Williamsport, said local banks contributing \$5.2 million and \$545,160 worth of tax credits are factors going toward the construction cost.

Another \$75,000 will come from The Reinvestment Fund, a Philadelphia-based community investment group, and \$91,000 from SEDA-COG Housing Agency.

The city plans to use a share of its impact fee money to widen Grove Street, in preparation of more traffic, Campana said.

Gas and water lines are ready to hook up, said John Grado, city engineer and city director of community and economic development.

Two similar senior living apartment complexes exist in Montoursville and Selinsgrove, and one each in Danville, Lewistown and lower Northumberland County, Fisher said.

The builder, T Ross Brothers Construction, of Milton, will be the main contractor.

If all goes as planned, the apartments will be occupied a year from now, Fisher said.

