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## Local

# Council head questions raise of impact fee

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### Montgomery County -

Doubling impact taxes — as is suggested in Montgomery County's Planning Board-endorsed growth policy — doesn't make sense considering the unevenness of development across the county, the Montgomery County Council president said Tuesday.

Marilyn Praisner pointed out that the rationale of raising taxes in favor of sustaining infrastructure is flawed, considering the some portions of the county are far from sufficiently developed.

"You have to be at a place where the infrastructure is in place ... before you can talk about sustainability," Praisner said. "But I would argue that for many of the suburban areas, infrastructure is not adequate at this point."

The comments came during a nearly two-hour-long talk about the components of the growth policy planners would like to change.

As the summer continues, Montgomery's growth policy is expected to be the top issue council members take up. Since the planning board came out with a proposal a few weeks ago, community criticism has focused on the suggested increases in taxes that developers will pay as well as the fact the growth policy glosses over such growth topics as affordable housing.

Community members can weigh in on the policy beginning this week.

But in anticipation of the public hearings, planning officials on Tuesday defended their decisions to raise impact tax rates as crucial to pay for infrastructure.

Karl Moritz, representing the group that compiled the growth-policy changes, emphasized that the impact-tax increases will not be passed onto the homeowners.

"It's really an added cost to the builder only," he said.

Moritz also told council members that certain areas left out of the growth policy, such as affordable housing, are addressed in the Planning Board's general work plans.

The purpose of the growth policy, Planning Board Chairman Royce Hanson said Tuesday, is focused more on design standards and other forms of infrastructure besides simply transportation.

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