

Seabrook Planning Board to propose impact fees

Question may be put before town voters

By [Susan Morse](#)

smorse@seacoastonline.com

October 09, 2007 9:20 AM

SEABROOK — The Planning Board will propose assessing impact fees on development at the March 2008 town meeting.

In addition, Chairwoman Susan Foote said the board will ask for a warrant article to fund a study to determine how to assess the fees. Both warrants will need to be done by mid-November, she said.

Determining the methodology of levying impact fees is 95 percent of the work, according to planning consultant Bruce Mayberry, who met with the Planning Board last week.

Seabrook has no current method of assessing impact fees. An estimated 65 towns in the state have the fees, Mayberry said. Impact fees are a municipal assessment against residential, industrial or commercial development projects to compensate for the added costs of public services.

The board has considered impact fees in the past, but the issue came to light again in June when school officials sent a letter to the Planning Board on the possible impact of a proposed housing development.

Beckman's Woods will add an estimated 53 homes near the Walton Road school.

Both the elementary and middle schools are presently at enrollment capacity, said SAU 21 Assistant Superintendent Maureen Ward. Classroom space, parking, and transportation costs would significantly increase if the homes include the average 1.8 number of students, Ward said.

Some towns impose impact fees before knowing how they want the money spent, which Mayberry said is putting the cart before the horse.

"Impact fees should not dictate the facility," he said.

It's best to have the item in a capital improvement plan or master plan, he said. The school has not included new classrooms in a CIP, according to Town Manager Scott Dunn.

Foote said the Planning Board would ask the Seabrook School Board for documentation on the need for new classrooms. Department heads should review their facilities and make note of how long the buildings and major equipment are expected to last, suggested Planning Board Vice Chairman Peter Evans.

Taxpayers, who have paid for expenditures, should get a return, he said.

Town Planner Tom Morgan asked Mayberry if impact fees could "hypothetically" be levied on a big shopping center in town?

"Sometimes you get more through negotiations than you will through impact fees," Mayberry said. "Let me put it that way."