



Advisory panel discusses impact fees

03/31/2006 -

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LAWRENCEVILLE — In a discussion led by a University of Georgia economist, an advisory panel helped county residents gain a clearer understanding of impact fees and Georgia law at a Thursday meeting.

The impact fee study committee brought together David Kesler and Bob Griggs, homeowner advocates who have pushed for impact fees for years, developers Mike Gynn and Tip Cape, real estate businessman Kerry Armstrong and others.

During Thursday's meeting the panel voted Michael Sullivan chairman and Michael Levensgood vice chairman.

Leading the discussion, UGA economist Jeffrey Dorfman covered the logistics of enacting an impact fee and addressed common concerns.

"There is a fear that people will go other places but it doesn't happen unless you're an unattractive place to live to begin with," Dorfman said about a county with impact fees. He said Gwinnett did not fall under that umbrella.

According to him, the typical fee would cost on average \$1,500 per home, which roughly evens out to an additional monthly mortgage fee of \$10.

"I don't think that price is so high that someone won't sign on the dotted line for a mortgage," he said.

In regards to whether a developer will be hit financially, Dorfman said they can put most of the fee back into the house price and the bigger picture is it helps the infrastructure.

Dorfman outlined Georgia law and addressed how the county can use the money gathered from citizens in the fee. Money from taxes cannot, for instance, be used to fix a pre-existing problem such as road complications because of traffic. The type of resources that can be funded by impact fees to improve a county's infrastructure would be public safety, libraries, stormwater management and parks and recreation facilities.

"I think impact fees are a very good idea because they will allow us to build infrastructures to help manage the growth of the county," said Art Sheldon, a Duluth resident and chairman of the county's transit board. "By November the county may recommend to the Board of Commissioners a firm plan and then set up another committee to determine the cost of the fees."