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## Cumberland council to vote again on impact fees

By [Alex Lear](#)

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CUMBERLAND — While it unanimously approved changes on Monday to a growth ordinance, the Town Council will vote again on amendments to an impact fee ordinance.

The council also tabled to its April 9 meeting a vote on the fiscal 2013 budget, to allow more time to complete its budget review.

After more than an hour's discussion, councilors voted in support of a change to the proposed amended impact fee ordinance. That finalized ordinance is scheduled to return to the council April 9.

Councilor Steve Moriarty moved that "it is the sense of the council that we adopt the amendments to the impact fee ordinance with the provision that the exemption be increased from 500 square feet to 1,000 square feet, and that the manager and his staff come back to us in two weeks with draft language reflecting that change."

Each time a new residential property is built in Cumberland, the owner is charged a \$100 growth management fee, and then an impact fee of \$1.36 per square foot beyond the first 500 square feet. The exemption is now due to increase to the first 1,000 square feet.

The Planning Board – which voted 4-3 last month to recommend the impact fee amendments to the council – recommended reducing the impact fee to \$1.09 per square foot, an amount that fits with a reimbursement formula for already funded debt on those expenditures.

Town Manager Bill Shane said earlier this month that several Planning Board members did not feel it is necessary any longer to have an impact fee, and that they think it could deter growth.

The Planning Board had unanimously recommended amendments to the growth management ordinance.

The two fees have gone toward the cost of acquiring the Rines Forest in 2003, as well as improvements to the Twin Brook Recreation Facility.

Shane noted recently that Cumberland has only averaged about \$30,000 to \$40,000 annually in revenues from impact fees in recent years, and that some feel those funds could be factored into taxes, "and everybody (could) chip in a few dollars and it's all paid for, versus having all the new people reimburse us for that."

Resident Peter Valente supported that sentiment at Monday's meeting. He said he has been advocating against impact fees the past six months, and that he would like to see the Rines Forest and Twin Brook costs shared by the community.

"We all pay for everything else in this town ... I just think these two parcels of property are a great benefit to the residents," Valente said. "We seem to be targeting a select few ... to pay for a town's obligation."

Mark Girard of North Yarmouth, a developer who owns property in Cumberland, also called for the fee's elimination, noting that it can be a lot of money for younger people who want to move to Cumberland.

"It's a one-time fee that's levied disproportionately against those folks who can least afford it," he said. "So you're incentivizing the people you want most to join the community to look elsewhere, and I think that's a very shortsighted approach."

Councilor Shirley Storey-King noted that 320 houses have been built in Cumberland in the past 10 years.

"With those revenues, the average taxpayer has saved \$24.50 a year in their taxes because of impact fees," she said.

The Town Council defeated the impact fee amendments as originally proposed, 4-3. Councilors George Turner, Tom Gruber, Mike Perfetti and Ron Copp opposed the amendments; Bill Stiles, Moriarty and Storey-King favored them.

The 1,000-square-foot exemption passed by the same margin, with Moriarty, Storey-King, Copp and Turner in favor, and Stiles, Gruber and Perfetti opposed.

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