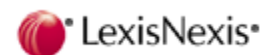




American Planning Association



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## **Developers may pay services impact fees**

Meg Tully, The Frederick News-Post, Md.

Sep. 17--Frederick County is on its way to charging new developments for the increased demand they put on fire and rescue services.

The Frederick County Commissioners decided Tuesday to do research on establishing a fire and emergency medical services impact fee.

The county is looking for a fair way to provide fire and rescue services to new developments without charging existing residents, Commissioner Kai Hagen said.

The commissioners are also studying several other development-related fire and rescue proposals. These include evaluation of rezoning requests based on response time and requesting fire apparatus-related road improvements during rezonings.

The proposals are moving forward, though the details have not been worked out. The county might adopt one or several, or pull the plug on all of them.

So far, impact fees seem the most popular, but setting the amounts might be a challenge.

The fees must be reasonably tied to the impact of new developments on fire and rescue services.

The commissioners have asked county staff to research the cost of commissioning a study to set the fee.

But it is not clear they will approve paying a consultant to complete that study.

Commissioners David Gray and Jan Gardner will consider hiring the consultant, but Commissioner John L. Thompson Jr. said he does not want to waste time and money.

Commissioner Charles Jenkins opposes impact fees. Hagen was absent from that portion of Tuesday's discussion and hadn't had a chance to review it by Wednesday afternoon.

Gardner believes the impact of development on fire and rescue services need to be studied for situations like that posed by the recent annexation of the Crum farm.

Walkersville fire and rescue services would serve any development on the farm, but those stations could not meet the county's response time standards of eight minutes for urban areas and 15 minutes for rural areas, Gardner said.

To get there, fire and rescue vehicles would have to travel a significant distance and cross U.S. 15, she said.

Jenkins will look at specific standards before determining if he favors the rezoning-related proposals, he said.

He flatly opposes the impact fees.

"We have dedicated fire tax, and not only that, if you actually have to use somebody coming to your house for an EMS-related call, you get billed for that as well," he said. "To put on a third layer, I think it's getting to be a bit of a fatted calf."

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