

Impact fees stay in Hartwood

BY KATIE THISDELL

Growth in Stafford County's Hartwood District must still pay for its impact on transportation.

Meanwhile, county supervisors removed transportation impact fees in another district while also continuing a years-long debate on imposing a countywide fee.

Tuesday night, the Board of Supervisors voted 5—2 to repeal transportation impact fees in the George Washington District. These were put into place in 2005 to, ideally, have growth pay for itself.

But Supervisor Bob Thomas said the fees have actually hindered economic development.

““We’d really like to have more options for shopping and eating in Stafford,”” Thomas said. He referenced one project under review by the Planning Commission that would have been hurt by a high commercial impact fee.

He also hoped funds from a countywide fee would go toward improving artery roads, rather than little-used streets.

Supervisors Ty Schieber and Cord Sterling voted against the repeal.

““Our roads are dangerous. They’re congested. They’re continuing to get congested. We don’t have the funding to fix all of them,”” said Sterling.

Meanwhile, the board maintained fees approved in 2003 in Hartwood, in the western part of the county, which has few commercial zonings.

Supervisor Gary Snellings said the fee has been helping with road improvements in his rural district, notably the Poplar Road project.

Earlier in the afternoon, the board sent a countywide fee proposal to its infrastructure committee after a staff memo detailed the potential loss of millions of dollars.

Under the new plan, developers would be required to pay \$5,465 per single-family home in new subdivisions, with lower amounts for town houses and apartments.

Funds would go toward the estimated \$204 million cost of upgrading 20 roads in Stafford. But committee members must decide what types of lots could be exempted from the fees.

Exempting approved preliminary plans and construction plans would mean a loss of about \$36.3 million in revenue. Much of the county’s current growth is happening on lots that are already approved.

Staff recommends exempting only approved subdivision construction plans, which are further along in the development process, and there are fewer of them.

Comments during the public hearing to repeal the fees in two districts were mixed.

Alane Callander questioned why the current fees would be done away with before a new fee was put into place.

““Sometimes those things take forever to work out, so why would you repeal the ordinance that’s in place?”” Callander said. ““We’ve suffered so long here with inadequate funding for roads.””

Developers have been paying \$1,603 for each new single-family home in the Central West area (Hartwood), and \$5,171 in the South East area (George Washington). Different amounts are paid

for other types of development.

Any developer in the George Washington District now paying those fees will no longer have to for current projects.

County resident Paul Gustavson said he's trying to move elsewhere in Stafford, but learned of the fee. "'Don't my taxes count toward the impact?'" he asked.

Also at Tuesday's meeting, the board:

Approved a conditional use permit for Radley Collision Center at Cranes Corner Business Park on Perchwood Drive. Geico and Enterprise will also be located on the site.

Approved a \$1.2 million contract for clearing for Rocky Pen Run Reservoir.

Referred to the infrastructure committee a discussion on a possible loan for improvements to bring Celebrate Virginia Parkway into the state's network.

Referred a solid waste amendment discussion to the infrastructure committee.

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