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Planners approve impact fee regulations

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NEW DURHAM — Following an extensive discussion and public hearing last week, planning board members voted to begin collecting impact fees on new homes and additions as a way to ease the tax burden of improvements to local schools.

The fees, which amount to \$2.49 per square foot for any habitable structure between 150 and 3,000 square feet, will be added to the cost of residential building permits starting next year, and will be used to off-set the financial impact of large-scale capital improvements within the Governor Wentworth Regional School District.

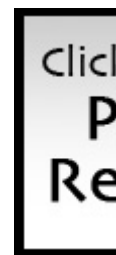
Board Chairwoman Cathy Orlowicz explained at the start of the Nov. 17 public hearing that a Town Meeting vote in 2008 gave the board the authority to put an impact fee ordinance in place.

Since then, she said, the board has worked with consultant Bruce Mayberry (widely regarded as one of the state's leading experts on impact fees) to develop a formula and set of regulations for the assessment and collection of the fees.

Explaining that there had been "quite a bit of discussion" among board members as to whether the fees should be assessed on a per-unit, per-bedroom, or per-square-foot basis, Mayberry said they had ultimately decided that the square foot method would be the easiest to calculate and enforce.

Stating that he had based his calculations on an estimated average of 0.49 pupils per household (consistent with New Durham's enrollment figures over the past decade), Mayberry said that after factoring in the average amount of space needed for each pupil and the average cost of school construction per square foot, he had come up with impact fees of \$1.39 per square foot for the elementary school and \$1.10 per square foot for the high school — a combined total of \$2.49 per square foot.

The average size of new homes in New Durham over the past few years has been around 1,645 square feet, meaning the average impact fee would be \$4,096, he said, adding that fees will not be assessed on existing homes unless a homeowner builds an addition that adds a minimum of 150 square feet.



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