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## Planning committee takes up impact fees in Madison County

BY NICKLAUS LOVELADY  
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The Madison County Planning and Development Committee will meet Thursday for the first time since hearing the pro and con arguments of bringing a school impact fee to the county.

The home buyer fees would be used to help pay for new schools.

Planning and Development Administrator Joe Parente said it is unlikely the committee will vote on a decision, but the path the committee is leaning toward could be determined. The committee would make a final recommendation to the full Madison County Board.

"The people on the committee have heard all the sides surrounding the issue, now they will meet to determine the best course of action for the county," Parente said.

The Edwardsville, Highland and Triad school districts argue a burden has been placed on the schools because of the overwhelming population growth in their portions of the county. They want to force home builders and developers to help pay for the additional growth.

Jerry Rombach, executive officer of the Home Builders Association of Greater Southwestern Illinois, has been the lead voice of opposition. He said because the impact fee is applied to only people who can afford new homes it is "blatantly unfair." In addition, he said the fee will not affect the developers as much as it will the home buyers.

"As long as the developers can pass it along to the home buyers they are going to," Rombach said. "If the market gets so bad that the buyer is unwilling to pay it, the developers are going to leave this area."

During the first of three public meetings held in July and August, representatives from the Edwardsville School District 7, Triad School District 2 and Highland School District 5, asked the board to consider imposing new home buyer fees to the unincorporated parts of the county to help pay for new schools.

"When you look at the growth occurring around our the county ... generated from the people the developers, it's a concern," District 7 Superintendent Ed Hightower said. "I hope the county considers asking the developers to pay for a small portion of that cost, and I underline a small portion."

District 7 is the only district of the three that collects impact fees. Last year, the district received agreements from Edwardsville, Glen Carbon and Hamel to impose the fees on new residential development. This impact fee requires builders to pay about \$2,000 for a two-bedroom home and about \$3,000 for a five-bedroom home. The money raised can only be used to purchase land or building construction.

District 5 and District 2 are seeking approval from the municipal governments in their jurisdictions and the county at the same time to include unincorporated areas in the process.

The Planning and Development Committee will meet in their conference room in the County Administration

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Building on Thursday at 4 p.m.

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