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Richmond residents back impact fees

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brFree Press Staff Report

Richmond residents voted Tuesday not to rescind a change to the town's impact fee ordinance. It was the second time in two years that voters were asked to pass judgment on a revision to the town's impact fees ordinance.

The tally was 326-258, with one spoiled ballot, according to Town Clerk Linda Parent. The 19 percent turnout for the vote was "more than people had predicted," Parent said.

Impact fees are levied on new construction to recoup capital costs incurred by the town as a result of that construction.

Selectboard Vice Chairman Erik Filkorn said the impact fees will benefit the town, and Tuesday's vote demonstrates that townspeople understand that.

"It keeps taxes down for existing residents" and closes some loopholes in the old ordinance, Filkorn said. "This removes a tremendous administrative problem. Now, a house is a house is a house."

Tayt Brooks of the Homebuilders and Remodelers Association of Northern Vermont, which lobbied against the impact fees, said his organization was disappointed with Tuesday's results.

"It's going to make housing less affordable in Richmond," he said. "We believe it's going to end up costing the taxpayers."

Because the measure to rescind the ordinance did not pass, the September ordinance will go into effect immediately, Filkorn said. The new ordinance imposes a flat fee of $2,828 for schools and $218.70 for fire services. The fees would not apply to homeowners who expand existing homes.

The previous ordinance imposed fees of $900 to $5,300 per new home depending on the lot size and number of bedrooms.

The new ordinance is available online at www.richmondvt.com/documents.php and at the Town Center.