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Richmond to hold impact-fees hearing Tuesday

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By Mal Boright
 Correspondent

A revised impact fees ordinance will have a public hearing and possibly a Selectboard vote Tuesday night at the Town Center meeting room.

Following a narrow defeat of a proposed revision of the impact fee ordinance in December, the board has been working on another fees ordinance, which has passed two readings at recent board meetings.

"My hope is that the Selectboard will take a vote," Chairwoman Fran Thomas said last week.

Towns impose impact fees on new homes to recoup the cost of added services for new residents.

The new proposal would set school impact fees for a single family house at \$2,828, regardless of the number of bedrooms in the new construction. In addition there would be a fee of \$218.70 for fire protection.

Current fees range from \$900 to \$5,000 depending on the numbers of bedrooms and size of the house under construction.

Proposed fees for highways were dropped during board discussions. Also gone from the proposal are various exclusions.

"We are going to treat everybody the same," Thomas said.

Tayt Brooks, government affairs director for the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Vermont, said he opposes the fees because school enrollment in Richmond is declining. A recent study by Richard Heaps of Northern Economic Consulting Inc. showed that school enrollment in Richmond is not expected to increase for decades.

Brooks said Heaps would be at the hearing.

Thomas said she would allow people to speak on the subject matter for two or three minutes each. "We will try to keep it (the hearing) to an hour or so."

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In August 2004 the Selectboard passed an impact fee schedule that was more than \$1,000 higher than the current proposal. A 170-name resident petition forced a December vote on whether to rescind the ordinance. The ordinance was defeated 135-117.

Thomas, Vice Chairman Erik Filkorn and Jared Katz voted in favor of the ordinance last year. Pete Parent and Tom Carpenter voted against it. Parent said he remains opposed to impact fees while Houle, who won Carpenter's seat on the board at the March town meeting, has said she would like to see the fees eliminated at some point.

If the Selectboard approves the new ordinance Tuesday night, residents could again petition to rescind it.

"I guess anything is possible," Thomas said. "We have made a lot of revisions based on public comments."

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