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Summerville puts off new impact fee

By [Bo Petersen](#)

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SUMMERVILLE -- Dodging for the moment one of those political fireballs in the Lowcountry, the town doesn't plan to add a transportation impact fee when it reapproves fees this year. That's despite some road problems that one Town Council member described as infrastructure falling apart.

Staff recommended delaying enacting a fee to pay for new roads, during the council's Finance Committee meeting Monday.

"With the economy as bad as it is right now" the extra fee would be too much of a burden for a start-up business to pay, said Town Administrator Dennis Pieper.

Council members generally agreed the timing wasn't good, but some had concerns for the town's ability to build new roads while trying to pay for ongoing repairs; the fees would not pay for repairs, but could free up other funds.

"We have things falling apart and we have no budget (to pay for the repairs) right now," Councilman Bob Jackson said.

Controversy over impact fees has roiled through council decisions across the Lowcountry. A fight over enacting the fees to pay for roads erupted earlier this year when Dorchester County Council considered doing it. Supporters say it's only fair for new residents to pay for new services and facilities to handle them.

The Charleston Trident Home Builders Association among others opposed it, saying it would hamper the recovery of their businesses, in turn slowing the region's recovery. The association sued Dorchester District 2 schools in September 2009 to stymie a recently enacted fee to help pay for new schools.

County Council is divided on the issue, and a vote is expected July 19 on a first reading on its road-impact fee. The meeting will be held 7 p.m. at the county service building, 402 N. Main St., Summerville.



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Impact-fee law mandates that the town must rework its existing fees to pay for new capital improvement needs. The fees are one-time charges on new construction to pay for new services, and revenue must be distributed among those needs. The fees have been paying for parks and recreation, but the need has shifted to new facilities for the police department and municipal court, said Lisa Wallace, assistant town administrator.

According to preliminary worksheets, most types of construction would be charged a higher fee. The fee for general retail construction, for example, could rise \$39 to \$900 from the current \$1,381 fee, depending on council decisions. The committee tabled the recommendation to give members time to review them.

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