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Transportation impact fee incentive suggested

By Nate Delesline

Culpeper County Supervisor Larry Aylor has an alternative to delaying for a year the implementation of transportation impact fees — a financial incentive to encourage businesses to come anyway.

Aylor introduced the idea to the town-county interaction committee at Wednesday evening's meeting, the committee's first gathering in eight months. He brought the idea forward as an informational item and no action was taken.

If implemented, impact fees would apply to new construction based on the number of vehicle trips per day the business or residential site is expected to generate. The idea is to establish a reliable stream of income that funds local transportation projects.

"My fear is that if we delay it...we will miss an opportunity to collect millions of dollars," Aylor said.

Aylor, a builder by trade who has supported the impact fee idea for several years, suggested the town and county consider implementing the fee but setting aside some funding through the county's economic development authority. The money would be an incentive available to businesses that claim the fees would be a hardship but still have an interest in moving forward.

The county approved the fee legislation in December but voted last month to delay implementation for a year; it would have taken effect in July. A hearing is set for next month on the proposed delay.

However, supervisor Sue Hansohn and Culpeper Town Councilman Dave Lochridge maintained that now is not the time to impose any new fees. Lochridge cited recent examples in California and Florida where governments are withdrawing impact fee legislation for economic reasons.

"We seem to be going in opposite ways from the people who are doing it," right now Lochridge said.

Economic commission review suggested

Also Wednesday, the committee heard from County Economic Development Director Carl Sachs, who suggested that the time is right to review the role and mission of the economic development advisory commission.

If the town and county support the review, Sachs said the outcome could include: Adding or eliminating members, revising the group's mission and objectives or disbanding the commission altogether.

Created in 1996, as a joint town-county committee, the commission replaced the Culpeper joint economic development board. Today, the group has 14 members, including representatives from the town, the county, the chamber of commerce and Culpeper Renaissance Inc.

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