



Bill allowing school impact fees advances

By Dave Munday
The Post and Courier
Friday, February 6, 2009

A plan to make new residents help pay for more schools around Summerville has cleared a key hurdle in the General Assembly.

After years of debate and failed efforts, a bill to let Dorchester School District 2 charge builders an extra fee to help build schools has made it through both the Senate and the House, although not without some wrinkles that still have to be ironed out.

Republican Sen. Mike Rose of Summerville pushed the bill through the Senate, mainly because it applies only to Dorchester School District 2, where schools are unusually crowded because of the county's growth spurt.

Senate and House versions of the bill

Bill with amendments passed by the house Thursday (Word Document ".docx" file)

Senate version of the bill (Word Document ".docx" file)

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The revised version goes back to the Senate next week. What happens next is largely up to Rose.

Rose said he's against telling the school board how much they should charge for new schools, but he also said he would have to weigh the bill's chances of getting passed without a cap.

"I will consult with my constituents to see what they want to do," Rose said Thursday. "Obviously, if it's this or nothing, I'll accept it. I'll compromise if needed. I'm not sure it's needed. I'm not for limiting the school board. We have to give the school board the tools to protect themselves."

The S.C. Association of Realtors will look for a way to kill the bill. The association is researching whether it's legal to change state law through local legislation and could also ask Gov. Mark Sanford to veto it, Chief Executive Officer Nick Kremydas said.

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Builders pass on impact fees to buyers, so impact fees simply make houses more expensive, which is not a good idea in this market, he said.

"It's unfair to tax homebuyers for schools," Kremydas said.

Home Builders Association of South Carolina Executive Officer Mark Nix said he's been arguing against the bill but isn't sure there's any way to stop it now.

"We're against it because it makes the whole process unaccountable," he said. "What's to keep it from just being a slush fund? But one senator can pass it because it's local legislation."

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