

Decision on impact fees deferred

New Chesterfield Board of Supervisors wants answers on roads plan

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A plan to require transportation impact fees will ride on for consideration another day in Chesterfield County.

The county Board of Supervisors, with four new members, voted yesterday to delay action on the issue for at least 30 days to get answers to some of the issues raised in a public hearing.

Veteran Supervisor A.S. "Art" Warren, who represents Clover Hill, presided as chairman after winning a unanimous election in the board's first action of the year. Newly elected Supervisor Daniel A. Gecker, who represents Midlothian, was elected vice chairman.

Only a handful of speakers addressed the issue of impact fees, and all were opposed to the idea.

The proposed fees are intended to help pay for roads to accommodate traffic generated by new housing. Developers who have already paid proffers to the county would not have to pay the proposed fee of \$5,820 per house.

Several questioned the fairness of the fees. George Emerson said he had paid the county for roads when he built a subdivision before proffers were required, and the proposed fees would give no credit for that.

"The guy across the street paid zero, and he would pay the same fee as I'd pay" for any new homes built on lots that hadn't paid a proffer, Emerson said.

Andrea Epps, chairwoman of the county's impact fee committee, said the group recommended deferral so that an integrated and comprehensive transportation plan could be prepared for the entire region.

Several speakers said the impact of the proposed fee would fall disproportionately on people who build smaller, less expensive homes.

In other early business, the board decided to ask the Planning Commission to reconsider the Upper Swift Creek plan to give more attention to environmental issues.

Of the 21 rezoning proposals that were before the board, four were returned to the Planning Commission for reconsideration, three were deferred and one was withdrawn.

The two most significant approvals were for Twin Rivers, a 70-acre mixed-use development next to Meadowville Technology Park in the Bermuda District, and Kickers Youth Soccer Club, a 53-acre soccer complex at state Route 10 and Chippenham Parkway in the Dale District.

During a public comment period added to the agenda by the new board, Howard Meyers asked what had happened to the \$7.5 million approved for a cultural art center in the 2004 bond issue.

Meyers estimated he has attended 250 indoor cultural events during the 10 years he has lived in Woodlake. None of them was in Chesterfield because none of the 20 venues he counts in the greater Richmond area are in the county.

Meyers suggested turning the old Clover Hill High School building into something similar to the Glen Allen Cultural Arts Center in Henrico County.

By the time he left the meeting room, he had been recruited by Rebecca T. Dickson, deputy county administrator for human services, to join the Chester Arts Foundation. The foundation is responsible for raising money in addition to the county appropriation to build an arts facility in Chester. The Clover Hill building also may have potential uses for the arts, she said.

The new 15-minute comment period was added just before the board's 5 p.m. dinner break. It will be a permanent fixture under rules adopted by the supervisors, four of whom are new to the five-member board and have seen what it is like on the other side of the microphone.

The board also will continue to have a 15-minute comment period at the end of the full meeting, which can run until after midnight. Members of the public may comment on items on the board's agenda during the course of the meeting.

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