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Wednesday, July 29, 2009 |

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## County revisits impact fees on growth

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Culpeper County Board of Supervisors will consider implementing an impact fee on new construction to generate local transportation funding.

Discussion about the fee, which is intended to make up for ongoing reductions and shortfalls in federal and state transportation funding, is set for 2 p.m. today at the county administration building.

This is the second time the county will consider the matter. In December, the supervisors rejected the idea by a 4-3 vote.

Those opposing the measure cited concerns about discouraging potential developers and the possible impact on longtime landowners who want to build one house on their property, instead of dividing their land into hundreds of tracts for profit.

Transportation impact fees are allowed under legislation passed by the General Assembly in 2007. The goal is to allow high-growth areas to generate funding for road improvements necessitated by development.

If approved, Culpeper could be the first municipality in the state to enact the fees. Other communities have considered them, but they have not yet been implemented elsewhere.

The county has established an advisory committee, set a fee service area and created a road improvement program that identifies specific projects.

Supervisor Larry Aylor heads Culpeper's Impact Fee Committee. He expressed confidence that changes to the proposed impact fee policy have addressed previous concerns. One change, he said, is the inclusion of the town in the fee service area. The town was excluded under the previous plan.

"That lowered the price point of the impact fee itself," Aylor said. "So that makes it a little more user-friendly."

Under the new plan, a single-family home would be assessed a fee of about \$430. Under the previous plan, the fee was about \$2,100. Fees for commercial establishments, assessed based on the type of business and square footage, have also been substantially reduced.

Another change is to the road projects identified under the plan. The revised plan removes a proposed overpass at U.S. 29 on Route 666. In its place is the outer loop road, which earlier this year received state approval. The loop road would connect Eggbornsville Road and U.S. 522, linking the roads north and west of town.

Also included is a realignment of Nalles Mill Road to intersect with Rogers Road and an extension of Ira Hoffman Lane to an intersection with Nalles Mill and Keyser roads.

Supervisors Tom Underwood and Steve Nixon were among the four who opposed the impact fees in December. Underwood said he's glad to see the changes but said that some residents have told him they're concerned that implementing new fees under the present economic circumstances is not a good move.

Public and private schools, farms, churches, libraries, hospitals and other buildings used by emergency workers are exempt from the fees. Single-family dwellings on family-owned lots are also exempt.

"I think we've got it fine-tuned where it's affordable but we're being responsible for what we're going to have to do," Aylor continued. "If we don't do this, what is your alternative?"

The alternative he said, would be preparing for higher taxes as state and federal funding for transportation continues to decline.

Another alternative exists in the form of proffers, or payments from builders to the county to cover the cost of enhanced services due to growth. However, since development is often done without the need for rezoning, no proffers are collected, according to a committee report.

"My initial thought is that it's a much better proposed ordinance that deserves consideration, but there are still a few minor aspects that still make me uncomfortable," Underwood said. "It's a big enough issue that it certainly deserves a work session, and we'll go from there."

Nixon, who said Tuesday afternoon that he hadn't had time to review the revised plan in detail, said it appears the committee has addressed the issues that caused the measure to be rejected.

"I'm pleased that they reduced the impact to single-family dwellings," he said, adding that the new figure was "workable".

However, Nixon also expressed concern about the inclusion of the town in the fee service area, saying some potential developers might look unfavorably on the fee, since the town assesses a business professional and license tax.

Aylor also acknowledged that the committee has not formally heard from town leaders, but also noted that, by law, the county is permitted to impose the impact fee inside town limits.

Citing a lull in formal county business, the supervisors have canceled the August monthly meeting. Aylor said the matter could come before the board for a vote in September.

## Reader Reactions

Posted by ( cs2020 ) on July 29, 2009 at 10:30 am

Isn't Aylor a builder? Can't these guys spell conflict of interest? How about just saying no to more building of homes for approximately five years. Culpeper does not need anymore houses at all or new people.

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Posted by ( county mom ) on July 29, 2009 at 8:15 am

Come on Aylor....we are going to pay higher state and federal taxes anyway for transportation. This pathetic tax is just another way for you to mismanage local money. And why if you want to tax the town did you not include the town's Inner Loop as a needed road project? More financial hocus pocus by the BOS.

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