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Impact fee plan hits the highway

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By [RHONDA SIMMONS](#)

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The Culpeper County Board of Supervisors put the brakes on implementing a transportation impact fee.

The board voted 4-3 Tuesday to deny a proposed impact fee that would have essentially raised funding for specific road-improvement projects.

Supervisors Brad Rosenberger, Steve Walker and Larry Aylor opposed.

If passed, the ordinance would have been included in the Comprehensive Plan and cost \$2,176.54 for anyone building a new house and much more than that for developers depending on the size of the facility.

According to Charles Carter of Carter Planning Group, LLC, a 50,000-square-foot grocery store would cost a developer \$712,094 in impact fees.

Culpeper County Planning Director John Egertson said the fees would likely generate 41 percent toward primary road projects. However, he expects that the state would provide the remaining 59 percent.

Supervisor Sue Hansohn wasn't so sure about relying on state funding and pointed to the slumping financial market as proof.

"With the way the economy is right now — it's looking very weak," she said, questioning who would pay for the projects if the state continues to provide reduced funding.

The three priority road projects were identified as the interchange at U.S. 29-Route 666, a connector road from Ira Hoffman Lane to Keyser Road and an extension of Ira Hoffman Lane from Keyser Road to U.S. 29.

Rosenberger — who has served on the board for 23 years — begged the supervisors not to toss the idea

and even suggested tabling the item for 90 days for further review.

“If we don’t make that interchange happen, we can use this money for secondary road improvements,” he said. “There are plenty of them out there.”

Supervisors Tom Underwood, Steve Nixon, Chairman Bill Chase and Sue Hansohn agreed to deny the proposed fees.

Chase, who supported the motion, warned the board about the potential loss of new development in Culpeper if such impact fees were enforced, telling the board a businessman would likely choose a county without impact fees rather than build in an area with them.

“I’d be one hell of a dumb businessman if I didn’t drive down the road,” Chase said.

Aylor, who served on the transportation impact fee committee and opposed the vote, said the proposed impact fees would generate much-needed money for existing road projects.

“If it just pays (for) two miles of road, that’s two miles of road that didn’t get paid (for) without it,” he said.

Before the vote, nine area residents pleaded with the board to reject implementing the transportation impact fees.

“I have a basic philosophical problem with transportation impact fees,” said Carter. “It really doesn’t seem like an equitable way to generate revenue.”

Carter even pointed to other local counties — Spotsylvania, Prince William and Stafford — that have opted to reject charging transportation impact fees.

Culpeper landowner Harris Burke said he was concerned about his son, Phillip, having to pay an extra fee for building on the family property.

“My son wants to locate on the property and we want him there as parents,” Burke said. “He plans to take over the little farm that we have as my health continues to deteriorate.”

The fee would not have applied to farm facilities, houses of worship, public schools, libraries, hospitals or any building used by emergency workers.

Rhonda Simmons can be reached at 825-0771 ext. 125 or rsimmons@starexponent.com .