



# Impact fee ordinance appears to be dead in the water

By Heidi Cenac

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ANDERSON COUNTY — A proposed impact fee for Anderson County is on hold for now.

The Anderson County Planning Commission has studied the effect impact fees would have and approved a draft ordinance last month. But a majority of Anderson County Council members say they have no interest in taking the issue any further.

Council member Ron Wilson, who introduced the request for an impact fee study, said he is not interested in pushing an ordinance that people don't want.

"That's a sure way to get it killed," he said.

The proposed ordinance would impose an impact fee on new development across the county. The fee is based on vehicle miles traveled per development unit and varies depending on the type of development. For example, the fee per detached residential home would be \$1,266. The fee for commercial shopping centers would be \$2.57 per square foot of floor area.

The revenue generated by the fee in a given district would pay for intersection improvements in that district. As roughly 1,600 new homes are built in Anderson County each year, impact fees could raise roughly \$2 million from residential construction alone.

Proponents of the fee say it's a way for growth to pay for itself.

But several County Council members say now is not the right time to introduce such an ordinance. For starters, it's an election year, and no one wants to be tagged as having raised taxes.

Council member Bill McAbee, who's been against the fee since discussions started, said the recent slump in the housing market should give council members another reason to rethink the fee.

Mr. McAbee said he sees the fee as a burden to homebuyers. Builders likely will pass down the cost to buyers. Since the selling price is used to assess a home's value, the impact fee also will cause new homebuyers to pay higher taxes, Mr. McAbee said.

"If it's up to me, it will never see the light of day," he said.

Council member Larry Greer agreed, saying it would suit him just fine if the fee never came up for a vote. If it does, he vowed to do everything he could to defeat it.

"I think it's bad for the county," Mr. Greer said. "I think it'll hinder progress, hinder development and

hinder growth.”

Council Chairman Michael Thompson said the fee will come up eventually. When it does, he would like to meet with residents opposing the fee to see if they work out their differences.

With construction and transportation costs rising and the amount of state tax revenue county governments receive decreasing, Anderson County has to find a way to keep up with its rate of growth, Mr. Thompson said.

Using population, housing and job growth projections, consulting firm TischlerBise reports Anderson County would need to improve eight intersections a year at a cost of about \$12 million to maintain the existing standard in unincorporated areas of the county.

“The money has to come from somewhere,” Mr. Thompson said. “I think the services we provide are part of the quality of life we enjoy.”

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