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Triangle Politics

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Impact fee battle hits Web

Ryan Teague Beckwith and Toby Coleman, Staff Writers

A group of local activists wants Wake County to WakeUp!

(That's their exclamation point, not ours.)

The group, officially called WakeUp! Wake County, supports higher impact fees on new homes, better funding of mass transit and more school bonds.

Last month, it set up a discussion board on Yahoo! (Again, their exclamation point.)

Though officially nonpartisan, the group includes some stalwarts of the local left: The Independent columnist Bob Geary, impact fee advocate Stan Norwalk and Democratic county commissioner candidate Rodger Koopman.

Not to be outdone, the Triangle Community Coalition, a nonpartisan group that represents builders and developers, has started its own blog, Growth Matters.

Chris Sinclair, the coalition's president, says the site will promote "a balance among economic growth, development, the environment and community needs while protecting the rights and interests of property owners."

WakeUp! is at www.wakeupwakecounty.com. Growth Matters is at www.growthmatters.org.

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THAT RADIO SONG: Harry and Louise are back on the air.

The latest ad about Raleigh's proposed impact fee increase takes aim at the money already being collected. It is paid for by the Home Builders Association of Raleigh-Wake County.

The ad is narrated by a nameless couple who sound a bit like the duo that helped sink President Clinton's health care plan in 1993.

In this ad, the man complains, "Raleigh officials can't even tell us what they've done with the money they've already collected. They haven't filed a report in over five years, even though they're required to by their own ordinance."

As the ad repeats four times, the city collected \$17 million in impact fees during that period.

Mayor Charles Meeker said the ad is correct, but off-topic. He said it was a "legitimate question" why the city has not done a report and noted that the city manager is preparing one. It will be finished by March 21.

But, he argued, that is not why the Home Builders are opposed.

"It's hard to understand why the information in this report would cause someone to oppose impact fees," he said.

MARTHATOWN: To remind those who haven't heard that she wants to sell a few houses in Cary, Martha Stewart's mug is plastered on one of the town's only billboards.

The maven of Omnimedia now smiles on drivers headed west on East Chatham Street before the Maynard Road intersection.

Just one question: Why doesn't she wear her post-prison poncho in public anymore?

POLITICAL TRAIL

* U.S HOUSE 4TH DISTRICT

U.S. Rep. David Price, a Democrat from Chapel Hill, will hold two Triangle town hall meetings next week. The dates are below:

• **In Cary:** 7 p.m. Tuesday, Cary Town Hall, 316 N. Academy St.

• **In Durham:** 7 p.m. Wednesday, Southern High School, 800 Clayton Road.

ON THE RECORD

"I've come to the conclusion that there are just some people who won't believe us no matter what we say." -- School board member Carol Parker, after County Commissioner Phil Jeffreys alleged that the majority of new students in Wake County are Hispanic and that most of them are illegal immigrants. A recent report showed that only 12.4 percent of new students are Hispanic, but Jeffreys refused to back down from his claim.

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