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Salisbury officials discuss fee

At work session, council members seek answers regarding a proposed impact fee

*By Earl Holland
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SALISBURY -- City officials sought to answer questions and continue their discussion on a proposed impact fee.

Jack Lenox, Salisbury-Wicomico Planning and Zoning director, addressed a short-handed City Council during a Tuesday afternoon work session regarding aspects of the plan. Absent during the work session was Councilman Gary Comegys, due to a mayoral candidate forum that evening, and Councilwoman Shanie Shields as a result of a health issue.

"It seems that each time impact fees are discussed, more questions arise," Lenox said.

Impact fees are one-time payments made by developers to pay for the increase in use of parks, fire, police and municipal facilities caused by their development, but may only be used for capital costs.

During an October City Council meeting, council members discussed the the issue and their concerns as to how it would fit in the city's capital improvement plan. The draft report from the consulting firm of TichlerBise was given to the city a year ago.

One of the issues brought up in the discussion was in reference to a lack of an exemption for affordable housing. The omission of such wording would be thought to affect organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, which builds homes for low-income tenants.

Lenox said if an exemption is wanted, then language in the draft would need to be crafted in the proposal.

City Councilwoman Terry Cohen said she would prefer to avoid exemptions.

Prior to the end of discussions, there was general optimism regarding the direction of the layout.

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