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## **Tough subdivision regulations a step in right direction**

It's a long time coming, but Rutherford County planners are making the right move with proposals for developers to contribute toward road projects and, possibly, schools.

The Rutherford County Regional Planning Commission unanimously adopted a new set of subdivision regulations Monday night, specifically calling for cash contributions for road work but leaving out, at least for now, escrow accounts for school construction. County planners want a decision from the state attorney general before asking developers to make contributions toward the construction of county schools.

Considering the impact large subdivisions have on infrastructure such as roads, it only makes sense that development pay for improvements to county roads that can't handle the influx of 200 to 300 new families.

Too many roads and highways that for decades saw nothing but a handful of tractors and farm traffic are now inundated with thousands of vehicles racing along them, causing a public safety hazard.

And that's not to blame developers, either. They're simply following the rules and providing a product based on demand. But a new direction is needed, and the county is moving that way.

Planners denied one 126-home subdivision proposal Monday night, largely because it would have overloaded the Midland Road area, including the water supply, in southern Rutherford County.

Still, the Planning Commission approved a 485-home subdivision on Shelbyville Highway in spite of the impact it could have on Christiana Elementary and Middle schools nearby.

We hope our county schools officials are aware.

One of the ideas being bandied about is to set up a planning commission with representatives from all of the county's municipalities and school systems to make sure each entity knows what's going on in and around it. For instance, the county school system typically doesn't send a person to county Planning Commission meetings to give input.

Instead, for years our leaders have simply reacted to growth, often waiting until schools have 18 to 20 portable classrooms before another school is built to accommodate the extra children. We must become more proactive, and these subdivision regulations could be part of the cure.

No doubt, the biggest questions will be about a school-development fee. The state tied the county's hands a year ago with a law enabling it to collect fees based on the square footage of development, but county officials declined to use it because it would require a bureaucracy to collect the money. With it available, we doubt the attorney general will approve a school-development fee.

It's worth a try, though.

Meanwhile, Rutherford County commissioners should adopt these new subdivision regulations to give planners better tools and make development come closer to paying for itself.

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