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## Impact fees on council agenda

By Katherine Crowell  
Staff Writer

SALISBURY -- Impact fees, rental registration policy and the city budget process are on the agenda for today's City Council work session.

Planning department director Jack Lenox is scheduled to present additional research on the impact fee study conducted by the Bethesda, Md.-based economic and planning consultant firm TischlerBise. City Council members first received a summary of the study during a work session in March.

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Lenox and his staff were asked to further research how impact fees could be used to address needs for fire, police, municipal facilities, parks and roads.

In the study, TischlerBise calculated the maximum impact fee amount feasible for each type of applicable land use -- residential and nonresidential. The amounts represent what is needed to maintain the current level of service as the population grows. Impact fees are generally used to ensure that new growth is paying a fair share of its cost on applicable capital facilities.

The maximum impact fees recommended on individual single family houses were \$904 for parks, \$393 for fire, \$286 for police and \$279 for municipal facilities. The impact fees on the multifamily residential sector recommended were \$641 for parks, \$278 for fire, \$203 for police and \$198 for municipal facilities.

Lenox has said the city may adopt fees less than amounts shown; however, the planning staff recommends the City Council adopt the maximum supportable impact fees associated with fire, police, municipal facilities and parks.

Council Vice President Gary Comegys said he is not in favor of implementing the maximum impact fees for a variety of reasons.

"I don't want to discourage growth in the city and push more growth out into the county," Comegys said.

Councilwoman Terry Cohen said Sunday she was still reviewing the material and had not decided whether she thinks the city needs to implement the maximum impact fees.

"The recent tax hike shows growth still isn't paying for growth," Cohen said. "The point of impact fees is to shift the burden onto those who will most benefit from the growth. ... The market will determine whether developers can pass those fees on to the consumer or not."

Both Comegys and Cohen are interested in impact fees for public safety.

The planning staff also considered establishing a road impact fee for specific sectors of the city to support certain projects, but found it to be preferable to establish a citywide fee instead, according to a memo from Lenox to City Administrator John Pick dated Aug. 21.

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The recommendations come at a time when the city's Capital Improvement Plan calls for road widening projects at Pemberton Drive for a total cost of more than \$4 million and South Division Street for \$690,000. Signalization costs for seven intersections estimated in the CIP total \$555,000.

## Rental registration

Also on the agenda today is a presentation from Director Tom Stevenson of Neighborhood Services and Code Compliance on the rental registration policy. This was the first year landlords were required register rental dwelling units annually and, if the rental structure was built before 1950, landlords were required to provide the city with proof of compliance with state lead abatement reporting requirements.

The absolute deadline for landlords to meet these requirements was pushed back to May 18. The penalty for failing to renew a landlord license, register rental dwelling units or prove compliance with lead laws is a fee of \$500 for the license for five consecutive years and \$500 to register a dwelling unit for five years.

NSCC reports that 598 licenses were properly renewed and about 6,500 rental dwellings were properly reregistered. About 150 of the city's 700 landlords were declared delinquent. A very small percentage of negligent owners included those who chose to simply ignore the legislation, Stevenson said.

"The most challenging hurdle for those who have been designated a delinquent owner has is their inability to comply with state abatement reporting requirements," said Stevenson in a memo to Pick.

To date, NSCC has received 28 applications for appeal of the designation the Housing Board of Adjustments and Appeals.

## Budget process

The last item on the agenda today is a discussion about the budget process. The city has asked department heads to turn in budget requests to the finance department on a staggered schedule beginning in early February and ending in early March, according to Pick.

The schedule, he says in a memo, provides the finance department and the Mayor's Office with six to eight weeks to review the budget requests and develop a balanced budget for submittal to council on April 15. The council then has six to eight weeks to review the budget requests and make the changes it desires before adopting by June 15. County request council to certify tax rate for the new budget early in June.


Both Comegys and Cohen said they would like to see changes made to the budget deliberation process.

Cohen is interested spending less time on viewing slides and presentations and starting the review process earlier.

"We've been doing some things that don't necessarily have to be done," Comegys said about the department head presentations during the budget deliberation work sessions. "Maybe we need to spend more time on deliberating instead of on the presentations."

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""We've been doing some things that don't necessarily have to be done," Comegys said about the department head presentations during the budget deliberation work sessions. "Maybe we need to spend more time on deliberating instead of on the presentations."

Yes, Gary, maybe you do. Remember the Old Mall presentation? Fifteen minutes of slides from the developers were all it took for you to give away \$14 million.

Posted: Tue Sep 04, 2007 8:20 am

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"Council Vice President Gary Comegys said he is not in favor of implementing the maximum impact fees for a variety of reasons."

Yet Comegys ran his reelection campaign with "Growth pays for growth" being a big part of his "Look what I did" and "Here's what I'm going to do."

Comegys is little more that a tool, but not the people's.

Posted: Tue Sep 04, 2007 8:17 am

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This is exactly what I have been preaching for the past 5 years.

Wicomico and Salisbury are on a crash course to Socialism.

Not only is the town 'brain drained' but it is also forcing out thousands of its youth.


What should have been done is to scale down the growth and size of your Government.

You don't have to reinvent the wheel just take a look over our border to Delaware. Privatization of government functions is the key.

Posted: Tue Sep 04, 2007 6:25 am

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