

Tuesday, September 25, 2007



Pet Calendar
Enter your pet in the Island Packet's Pet Calendar contest.



Win a week's stay oceanfront on Hilton Head Island!
Sign up today.



William Byrd Custom Homebuilder
843.686.4166
www.wbyrd.com



news sports entertainment opinion lowcountry life jobs cars homes classifieds shopping vacation services

Search

GO

Advanced Search

Search **News** in the Lowcountry and the Coastal Empire.

Home » Opinion

Say yes to impact fees for school construction

Published Tuesday, September 25, 2007

3 Comments | Email it | Print it | XML Feeds | | | |

Beaufort County Council Chairman Weston Newton didn't get an answer Friday when he asked state Rep. Richard Chalk whether he would support legislation for school impact fees.

Chalk should answer that question with a resounding yes and so should the rest of the Beaufort County and Jasper County legislative delegations. More importantly, legislators from the Lowcountry and other areas of South Carolina struggling to cope with growth should lead the charge to get a bill passed.

We need a better way to pay for the new schools that are a direct result of the thousands of new homes being built here. Resident homeowners no longer have to pay for school operations through property taxes, but they do pay property taxes that go for debt service (read new schools).

The burden for building these new schools should fall largely to the new residents generating the need for them. This is no small matter in Beaufort County. The next school bond referendum we will be asked to support likely will come with a \$175 million price tag.

South Carolina passed the Development Fee Act in 1999. Unfortunately, it specifically does not include impact fees for schools, and it specifically excludes school districts from collecting impact fees.

At the time, Beaufort County had been collecting a school impact fee of \$953 per home since 1995. But a few months after the new state law was enacted, the county dropped the school impact fee and added impact fees for roads, parks and libraries.

Previously, the county only charged impact fees for schools, drainage and fire.

Interestingly -- and unfortunately -- the school district did not raise a fuss when the school impact fee was excluded in state law and dropped by the county in 1999. How times have changed.

The first local legislator who needs to get on board is state Sen. Catherine Ceips. A bill that would allow school impact fees if approved by voters in a referendum has been sent to the Senate Finance Committee. The bill is sponsored by Sen. Randy Scott, who represents fast-growing Dorchester and Charleston counties.

Ceips should work to see this bill or a similar one gets through the Senate when the legislature reconvenes in January.

Chalk's hesitation in answering Newton's question at the chamber's State of the Region breakfast Friday is a little hard to understand. He should stand four-square behind



Capturing Life in the Lowcountry Since 1970
Subscribe to The Island Packet today!

Member Center

→ Login/Register

→ User Agreement

→ Privacy Policy

Contact Us

User's Guide

Forms

advertisement

Make any night an occasion.
Fine food & gracious hospitality.

Serving Islanders & Visitors for over 14 Years!

14 GREENWOOD DRIVE
LOCATED IN THE GALLERY OF SHOPS
842-5857

NOW OPEN FOR LUNCH MONDAY - FRIDAY
OPEN 7 NIGHTS A WEEK • 5:30 - 10:00

Looking for a new job?

Great Restaurants

advertisement

Yes No

Yes No

Yes No

SEARCHES
Submit Query

Other stories in this section

- State, town should move to transfer dock ownership
- Say yes to impact fees for school construction
- State officials must put public's interests first
- County needs to get financial house in order
- Local Red Cross group getting finances in order
- Why does a golf cart cross a busy highway?
- Speed limit concerns merit expeditious review
- Gang prevention program could be important tool
- Notification offers help to surviving crime victims
- Lawmakers need to fix their legislative mess
- More

expanding ways for us to pay for new schools. The state's impact fee law has plenty of safeguards in terms of documentation and restrictions on use for any new impact fees.

As the school district prepares for a likely school bond referendum next year, the fourth referendum in the past 14 years, it's not hard to see why we need another alternative to pay for new schools. Beaufort County taxpayers have taken on nearly \$300 million in property tax debt for school construction since 1995. Another \$175 million, with more certain to come, is a lot to ask.

We need some help, and the answer lies in Columbia.

 Email it |  Print it |  XML Feeds |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 

Copyright © The Island Packet, 2007.

VISIT  REAL Cities SITES Visit the Carolinas: [Beaufort, SC](#) [Charlotte, NC](#) [Columbia, SC](#) [Hilton Head Island, SC](#) [Myrtle Beach, SC](#) [Raleigh, NC](#) [Rock Hill, SC](#)

  