

The Post and Courier

Board hears feedback on fees

By Diane Knich

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SUMMERVILLE — William Auxt learned recently that he would have to add \$2,500 to the cost of a house he's building if a proposed plan for a school impact fee doesn't include an exemption for homes already under construction.

The current plan for levying the fee, which homebuilders will have to pay on new homes in the rapidly growing neighborhoods around town, requires that it be paid before a certificate of occupancy is issued for the new dwelling.

But Auxt wants the Dorchester District 2 School Board to change that before it adopts the final version of its impact fee resolution. That could happen as early as Monday, at the board's next meeting.

Previous story

[Builder impact fee in works](#), published 06/03/09

The school board held a meeting Tuesday night at Summerville High School to give the public an opportunity to voice its concerns and give feedback on a proposed resolution on specifically how the district will levy the fee. The \$2,500 school impact fee on new homes was approved by the Legislature in February. But the school board must approve a resolution to officially adopt the fee and to establish procedures for collecting it.

District officials have said the fee is necessary to cover some of the cost of building new schools. Now, all but two of the district's schools are full or overcrowded.

Shannon Dwinnell, a builder who is building Auxt's home, said he thinks houses that already have building permits should be exempt from the fee. Applying it to homes that are already under way "is just wrong," he said.

Auxt said he would have considered building in Berkeley County if he had known the school impact fee was in the works for Dorchester District 2.

But Summerville resident Lucy Anne Cathcart encouraged the board to charge the fee on all new homes, no exceptions, and to do it quickly. The financial burden for building new schools was previously heaped on longer-term Summerville residents, she said. She wants new residents to cover some of the cost of the schools their children will attend.

And, she added, builders and lower-income homebuyers who can't afford the fee should look for financial help elsewhere.

"Please get these impact fees in motion now," she said to board members.

Kenneth Seeger, a developer and president of MeadWestvaco's Community Development and Land Management Group, said he's behind the fee because the entire area's reputation is enhanced by the high quality of District 2 schools.

"Good schools raise home values and are catalysts for a better quality of life," he said.

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