

# The Post and Courier

## Builder impact fee in works

By Diane Knich

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SUMMERVILLE — New home builders in the rapidly growing suburban area around Summerville are expected to have to pay an extra \$2,500 per house soon to help pay for new schools.

The Dorchester District 2 school board met Tuesday to review a draft of a legal document on specifically how it will levy the school impact fees. Officials say the district desperately needs money to build new schools because all but two of its buildings are full or overcrowded. The fees will help pay for the construction of new schools needed to serve families in the district's new housing developments, but they won't fully cover the cost.

The impact fee will have to be paid before an owner occupies a new house. Builders often pass on impact fees to buyers, so the move could make new homes more expensive.

The school board tentatively agreed to hold a public hearing on the impact fee resolution June 16. It soon will announce the meeting time and location. It will then revise the proposed resolution presented Tuesday, and likely vote on it at its meeting June 22. Board members said they hope to start charging fees July 1.

Charlton deSaussure, an attorney for the district, said only new low-income and retiree housing with specific deed restrictions are exempt from the fees. "You don't want to add to the cost of building low-income housing," he said.

Superintendent Joe Pye said many eyes are watching how the district implements the fees, so "we can't afford to botch this."

A bill sponsored by state Sen. Mike Rose, R-Summerville, cleared the Legislature in February giving District 2 the go-ahead to charge school impact fees on new homes. The Legislature had banned the practice about a decade ago, largely because of opposition from lobbyists for homebuilders. But Rose's bill passed because it only applied to the school

district, not the entire county, and because it was considered local, not statewide, legislation.

Rose attended Tuesday's meeting and said he was excited to see the impact-fee process move forward. He thinks it will help the county's problems with crowded schools, he said. But he wishes the district could charge more than \$2,500 per dwelling. Rose said the amount was a compromise to pass the bill. "It's a start," he said.

## Previous story

[District wins right to add impact fees](#), published 02/12/09

DeSaussure said a new school with the capacity for 800 students would cost about \$22.9 million. And he estimated that a new development with 1,600 homes would have enough children to fill the school. But that development would only generate about \$4 million in impact fees. The district still needs to find other methods to pay for new schools, he said.

Pye said he's looking forward to the public hearing. "You have to let people have their voice," he said.

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