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Cumberland council to vote on budget, ordinance changes

By [Alex Lear](#)[E-mail and share](#)

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CUMBERLAND — The Town Council scheduled several public hearings Monday, on adoption of the fiscal 2013 budget and proposed growth and impact fee ordinance changes.

The hearings will take place at the council meeting on Monday, March 26, when councilors are expected to vote on adoption of next year's spending plan.

The operating budget could rise from \$7.6 million in fiscal 2012 to nearly \$7.9 million next year, an increase of nearly \$220,000, or 2.8 percent. Increases in fuel contingency, county taxes and abatements contribute to the added amount.

The fiscal 2013 municipal budget would be about \$8.75 million. The net budget increase of about \$550,000 would be offset by \$474,000 in added town value, resulting in a tax revenue increase of about \$75,000.

As a result, the municipal impact on the tax rate would be an increase of 7 cents, or 0.5 percent, over the current tax rate of \$15.80 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

Town Manager Bill Shane has suggested, however, that school spending could boost the tax hike to a combined 4 percent to 6 percent.

The capital improvements component of the municipal budget could see a significant increase, from about \$330,000 this year to about \$906,000 in fiscal 2013.

The increase is due largely to the town beginning a more intense road improvement program that Shane and other town staff have said is long overdue.

Ordinance changes

The Town Council will also be voting March 26 on recommendations made by the Planning Board late last month on growth and impact fee ordinance changes.

The Planning Board was divided on the impact fee amendments, voting 4-3 to recommend them to the council.

Every time a new residential property is built in Cumberland, the owner is charged a \$100 growth management fee, and then an impact fee of \$1.36 per square foot beyond the first 500 square feet. Those funds have gone toward the cost of acquiring the Rines Forest in 2003, as well as improvements to the Twin Brook Recreation Facility.

The Planning Board recommended decreasing the impact fee to \$1.09 per square foot, an amount that fits with a reimbursement formula for already funded debt on those expenditures.

"There are several Planning Board members that did not feel it was any longer necessary (to have an impact fee)," Shane said, noting that they thought it could deter growth and that they did not want to discourage people from building in Cumberland.

The town has only averaged about \$30,000 to \$40,000 annually in revenues from impact fees in recent years, Shane said, noting that some feel those funds could be factored into taxes, "and everybody (could) chip in a few dollars and it's all paid for, versus having all the new people reimburse us for that."

The Planning Board unanimously recommended amendments to the growth management ordinance.

One change is allowing 45 residential growth permits to be issued annually, as well as five for affordable housing. Currently, 44 residential permits are allowed, along with four for Chebeague Island, which seceded from Cumberland in 2007. Only two affordable housing permits are currently allowed.

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