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## Impact fees on developers are entirely fair

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I started with amazement reading Charlie Payne's recent letter expressing his concerns about impact fees ["Stafford's impact fees are unfair to builders," Sept. 7].

Impact fees are those a developer would pay when he subdivides land into building lots. They are charged to cover the *impact* of new development on our inadequate transportation system. We also collect "tap" fees to cover the cost imposed on our county utility system created by new customers.

Impact fees are not a new tax. They are a fee that gets charged only if someone is taking an action that imposes costs for the county infrastructure. Without impact fees, a portion of everyone's annual tax bill is diverted to pay the costs of new development. If 1 percent of everyone's tax bill supports costs imposed by new development, it is the taxpayers, instead of developers, who are saddled with the cost.

Payne forgets that when developers rezone their property, this usually comes with a series of "proffers." These are cash or in-kind contributions to mitigate the impact of the new development that a higher-density zoning brings and are common in Virginia. Today the proffer guidelines for transportation are \$15,000 per lot. Does he really think that an impact fee that is about a third of the proffer amount is "unfair"?

Is it really fair to expect the taxpayers to shoulder the costs developers impose? We have enough on our plates with the costs of rebuilding schools, upgrading roads to meet existing needs, building fire stations and libraries, and adding park capacity.

We do agree on one element. I, too, "hope the county makes a smart and equitable decision, fairly applying the cost for new investment in county infrastructure."

It is only fair for those who impose a cost on a community to mitigate that cost rather than ask the taxpayers to subsidize them.

Cord Sterling

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