

The Post and Courier

Mayors debate impact fees, growth plans at home builders meeting

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Don't get home builders — and apparently a mayor or two — started about impact fees.

The controversial topic came up Tuesday during a mayoral roundtable at the Charleston Trident Home Builders Association annual meeting.



Photo by Leroy Burnell

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Homebuilders and guests chat before the start of the Charleston Trident Home Builders Association meeting Tuesday, which included a mayoral roundtable.

The Post and Courier's TV host and writer Warren Peper, who moderated the panel talk, asked Summerville Mayor Bill Collins about the charges and their effect on job growth. A \$2,500 impact fee on new homes is assessed by Dorchester District 2 school district, and county road impact fees have been discussed recently.

"We have impact fees. They help us," Collins says. "We built a fire station with one. We don't have transportation impact fees. The county does."

He went on, "I'm interested in bringing jobs," noting that 58 percent of the town's workforce drives to another locale for their job. The Regional Development Alliance serving Berkeley, Dorchester and Charleston counties has been laboring to bring employers to the area. Dorchester County's economic development group also is busy.

"Hopefully they can bring a Class A (top-of-the-line) business park on the Interstate side of town," he says.

North Charleston Mayor Keith Summey wasn't queried about the subject but felt like he should answer. "I don't believe in impact fees," he says.



Photo by Leroy Burnell

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Association executive vice president Philip Ford was on hand.

Peper quipped that it's not always easy to get a panelist to respond to every question; this time, Summey responded to a question he wasn't even asked.

The city and town chiefs, which also included Hanahan Mayor Minnie Blackwell and Mount Pleasant Mayor Billy Swails, covered a range of subjects including the debate over extending Interstate 526 and whether mayors should focus more on the region or on their own constituencies.

Blackwell says one of the mayoral focuses is to "look at the population they are serving. We see young people 25-45 years old. All the planning is around this age group."

Swails said he sought the job to serve Mount Pleasant. "I didn't run to be re-elected in four years," he says. It isn't the pay, adds Swails, an insurance agent, noting that he could make more money in 30 days selling wind policies than take home pay as mayor.

About 100 people turned out at the Home Builders meeting at Crowne Plaza Hotel in North Charleston.

Philip Ford, executive vice president, noted that the Charleston area recently gained its fourth member of the South Carolina Housing Hall of Fame when John Templeton of Special Properties was elected. Others include Georgia Toney, Andy Anderson and Ted Bailey.

The Post and Courier sponsored the luncheon meeting.

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