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Realtors oppose Dorchester impact fee

BY ROBERT BEHRE
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Dorchester County Council is expected Monday to discuss a new impact fee that would generate new dollars for road widening and other highway projects.

But the Charleston Trident Association of Realtors is hoping to put the brakes on the idea, its government affairs director Ryan Castle said.

"Even now, as the economy is struggling and home prices are lagging, it's not time to artificially inflate the market with impact fees," Castle said Saturday. "Ultimately, the property buyer pays all the impact fees."

Castle sent out an alert to the group's members, asking them to consider e-mailing County Council members and appearing at Monday's meeting.

Dorchester County Council Chairman Jamie Feltner said Saturday he is inclined to support a fee to help pay for a new master transportation plan.

He said current residents have been saying they don't want to have to pay for the infrastructure needed as the county grows.

"They don't want to pay for all this growth," Feltner said. "The people who are coming here, the people who are creating all this growth, should offset this cost."

The transportation impact fee isn't expected to be passed until this spring, Feltner said, and it's unclear exactly how much it would add to the cost of developing a home or a commercial project.

Castle said any additional cost is unwelcome.

"Impact fees just go against that because it stifles development and pushes it to more areas," he said.

But Feltner noted Berkeley County has a transportation impact fee.

"If you have a firm, economic climate in your county and a good school system and a good transportation system, all those things people like to have, then you'll be able to sell homes," he said. "If you overcrowd your schools and roads, then people won't want to live there."

The Dorchester County School District 2 recently imposed a $2,500-per home impact fee to raise money for school construction, and that fee is being challenged in court.

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