



Wednesday, Feb 11, 2009

Posted on Tue, Feb. 10, 2009

Builders, developers protest Georgetown impact fee plans

By Kelly Fuller

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Developers and homebuilders in Georgetown County have joined forces to oppose the passage of new construction impact fees that County Council members expect to give a third and final reading tonight.

Those against the impact fees met in Litchfield Monday to study the numbers and discuss the significance of passing additional building costs.

Impact fees, which are used to pay for infrastructure in new developments, would increase taxes and burden those seeking building permits in Georgetown County, residents said Monday.

"In today's economy, they need to jump back," said Richard Weston, a local Realtor who has led the fight against impact fees. "This has been in the planning for a long time, and they didn't want us to know about it."

The local Homebuilders Association will present a resolution to County Council tonight, asking for a moratorium on impact fees, Weston said.

The impact fees should not be used for the completion of roads, jails and libraries, Weston said.

He said a study identifying community crucial needs in Georgetown County is outdated. The county had the study done as part of a long-range capital improvement plan.

It also is unclear whether impact fees would fall on people who must rebuild their homes, according to some residents.

"They're going to raise our taxes," said Litchfield Fish House owner Bob Mims. "[The ordinance] is going to be so cloudy. When people rebuild or replace their homes, some jerk will say, 'it's going to cost you \$10,000 to do this.'"

"There are other ways to get money," said Realtor Jimmy Smith. "There are creative ways. Maybe you could spread it over a period of years. There are other creative ways to do this thing. They haven't thought it out."

The impact fees passed second reading with only slight opposition.

County Councilman Ron Charlton voted previously against the infrastructure fees.

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