

# Carroll commissioners to vote on keeping schools impact fee to zero for developers

By Christian Alexandersen Times Staff Writer | Posted: Sunday, August 4, 2013 12:00 am

The fee charged to residential developers to cover new school construction or additions to existing schools to increase capacity could remain at zero following a proposal by the Carroll County Board of Commissioners.

The board directed county staff Thursday to develop a resolution that would keep the county's schools impact fee at zero from June 2014 to June 2016. In August 2012, the board voted to temporarily lower the county's school capacity impact fee for all new residential development to zero until June 2014.

Commissioner Robin Bartlett Frazier, R-District 1, said she wanted to keep the schools impact fee at zero to give developers security that the county will not charge them a fee in two years that they don't have to pay now.

"It shows an intent," Frazier said.

In the past, the county has charged home developers two impact fees when they file their application to build a house — one to address increased school capacity and another to build parks. The thinking behind the impact fees is that the more people that move into new homes, the more facilities are needed, according to Ted Zaleski, director of the county's Department of Management and Budget.

The school impact fee previously charged to developers had varied from \$2,257 to \$7,006, depending on the kind of home that is built.

Since the Carroll County Public School system's student population is declining and capacity does not need to be increased, Zaleski said he doesn't see a need to collect an impact fee right now.

Commissioner Haven Shoemaker, R-District 2, expressed concern about keeping the impact fee at zero when the housing market is steadily improving in Carroll. Also, Shoemaker said, there's no reason to extend keeping the impact fee at zero for an additional two years before the original two-year, 2014 time frame is up.

"I think we may be moving hastily," Shoemaker said. "I think it's premature."

Frazier said she wanted the board to vote to keep the impact fee at zero well before the 2014 deadline so that it gives developers time to file their building applications. If the board waited until the deadline to keep the impact fee at zero, it could cause a rush of applications from developers that want to avoid paying the fee, she said.

Waiting until the 2014 deadline to extend the impact fee resolution will create more uncertainty for developers, according to Commissioner Dave Roush, R-District 3. It's hard to know how much time developers need to make a decision on an application without rushing them, Roush said.

County staff will develop a resolution and hold a public hearing in the future on the proposal before the commissioners vote on it.