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Georgetown County considers adding fee on building

By Aliana Ramos

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Developers could pay thousands more to build new homes and businesses in Georgetown County next year under an impact fee proposal the county's planning commission will consider today.

The county is hoping the impact fees will help defray the cost of new roads, police departments, parks and libraries, all part of its Visions II \$330 million capital improvement plan. The fees also are designed to help reduce the burden on taxpayers.

"This is a very fair way to do it," said Planning Director Boyd Johnson. "It was what I would describe as an exhaustive study to make sure it is very fair. I don't think it's enough to discourage the builders."

The commission meets at 5:30 p.m. today at the Georgetown County Courthouse, 129 Screven St. in Georgetown.

Under the proposal, the impact fees would be collected when a building permit is issued. That means yet-to-be constructed homes in planned developments such as Crown Pointe and Harmony Township would be subject to the fees.

Crown Pointe, when completed, is expected to add about 6,000 homes to Georgetown County over the next two decades, according to a preliminary conceptual plan approved in October 2007.

With \$5,098 in road, park, library and law enforcement impact fees per single-family home, the development could generate about \$30 million.

Beaufort-based Copper Station Holdings LLC, which owns the property, declined to comment about the progress of the project and about the potential impact fees.

Although Crown Pointe is the largest community planned in the area, there are several other subdivisions, including Peru Plantation, Yauhannah Landing, Summergate and Harmony Township that also would be affected by the new fees.

Some of the impact fees are countywide. Others vary depending on the location of the property.

For example, in unincorporated Andrews a new, single-family, detached home would be charged a \$1,178 park impact fee. The same home in the Waccamaw Neck would be charged a \$2,162 park fee.

The fees also vary depending on the size and use of the property.

A new nursing home would be charged a \$46 law enforcement impact fee while a new office building would pay a \$535 fee per 1,000 square feet.

Not all fees would be applied to all new construction. Impact fees for recreation and libraries, for example, would apply only to new residential units while fees for roads will be assessed on all new businesses, homes, institutions and other new buildings.

Road fees are the most expensive; the highest fee of \$5,750 would be charged to a new retail store or restaurant.

The planning commission will issue a recommendation to the County Council, to which the ordinance will be sent for a final decision.

At a glance

The proposed impact fees:

Parks and recreation | unincorporated Andrews, \$973 to \$1,317; unincorporated Choppee, \$1,917 to \$2,595, unincorporated Georgetown, \$1,589 to \$2,152; unincorporated Waccamaw Neck, \$1,786 to \$2,418.

Library | \$303 to \$685 per residential unit

Law enforcement | \$332 to \$750 per residential unit; \$5 to \$535 per nonresidential unit

Road | \$1,200 to \$2,380 per residential unit, \$220 to \$5,750 per nonresidential unit

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