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Georgetown library depends on fee pact

By Aliana Ramos

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Georgetown County and the city of Georgetown have yet to reach an agreement on collecting proposed impact fees, which could be a major factor when deciding where to put a planned library.

The county is hoping to set aside \$27 million to expand and build new libraries throughout the county by 2030, as part of its Visions II capital improvement plan. About 56 percent of that budget is expected to be spent on the Georgetown Library.

If an impact fee ordinance under consideration passes the County Council, the county expects to generate about \$7.4 million over the next 12 years in impact fees to defray the cost of building the new libraries.

However, state law requires that impact fees must be spent where they are collected - in this case, in unincorporated Georgetown County, which does not include the city, said attorney Tyson Smith. The county contracted with Smith to write the impact fee ordinance.

"From what we heard, it seems that our options are to move the library outside of the city or collect some form of impact fees from the city," said county Planning Director Boyd Johnson.

Georgetown Mayor Lynn Wood Wilson said he has not had any discussions with the county on implementing new impact fees.

The city already has two impact fees in place, for water and sewer service..

The county's planning commission reviewed the proposed impact fees Thursday and voted to send the ordinance on to the County Council with a recommendation for approval. The commission stipulated, however, that the collection of impact fees between the county and the city be resolved.

The library impact fee, if approved by the County Council, would apply only to new homes. The fee would be assessed when the building permit was issued. Detached, single-family and mobile homes would be charged \$685 per unit. Attached units like townhomes would be charged \$303 per unit under the proposed ordinance.

Assistant Library Director Trudy Bazemore said it could be a few years before library construction could start.

Currently, a 5,000-square-foot expansion is under way at the Andrews library. A new library for the Waccamaw Neck area, off Willbrook Avenue, is the next project on the list, Bazemore said.

A move could also be in the works for the Georgetown Library from its current 405 Cleland St. location in Georgetown.

"I don't think there is an opportunity for growth where we are located now," Bazemore said. "We don't have room behind us or to the side of us."

The Georgetown library is set to expand from 18,750 square feet to 40,000 square feet at a cost of \$15 million.

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