



## Impact-fee bill passes in state Senate

By Dave Munday

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SUMMERVILLE — A bill to make developers help pay for the cost of new schools around town made its way through the state Senate on Tuesday.

The legislation, written by Sen. Mike Rose, R-Summerville, would allow the Dorchester District 2 school board to impose impact fees on new houses to pay for schools to serve new residents.

"My bill gives the school district the authority to protect itself," Rose said. "Counties and cities have a financial incentive to keep approving houses. They have no financial incentive to consider schools."

Current state law does not allow impact fees to build schools.

District 2 residents have been urging a change in the law for years, as new houses have crowded schools.

Past efforts to change the law on impact fees have failed. Rose said his legislation passed because it applies only to District 2. State law doesn't allow legislation that affects only one municipality, but it allows laws that affect only school district, he said.

Sens. Larry Grooms, R-Bonneau, and John Matthews, D-Bowman, the other two local senators, also backed the bill.

District 2 includes North Charleston and Summerville as well as unincorporated areas of Dorchester County. Rose's bill says a certificate of occupancy for a new house can't be issued until the school district gets the impact fee.

The school board would determine how much that should be, Rose said.

The fees could used to build public schools or pay existing or new school bonds. They

could not exceed what each new house would actually cost the district for schools.

Studies show that the district would need 15 new schools to serve the 15,000 houses that have already approved in the district, Rose said.

The bill must also pass the House. Since it is local legislation, Reps. Jenny Horne, R-Summerville; Patsy Knight, D-St. George; and Annette Young, R-Summerville, will determine its fate, Rose said.

The school board, inspired by Rose's bill but not specifically referencing it in a resolution, unanimously endorsed the concept of impact fees at its meeting Monday night.

Last week Rose got the Senate to pass another bill that requires the District 2 superintendent and the county and municipalities to keep each other informed how new neighborhoods would affect schools. The school board endorsed that bill Monday.

Dorchester County Council Chairman Jamie Feltner said he will introduce a resolution at Monday's council meeting asking council to endorse both bills.

"Citizens have said time and time again they don't want to pay for the infrastructure for new people," Feltner said.

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