
THE CAPITAL • ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND • HOMETOWNANNAPOLIS.COM • CAPITALONLINE.COM

Finished printing? Close this window

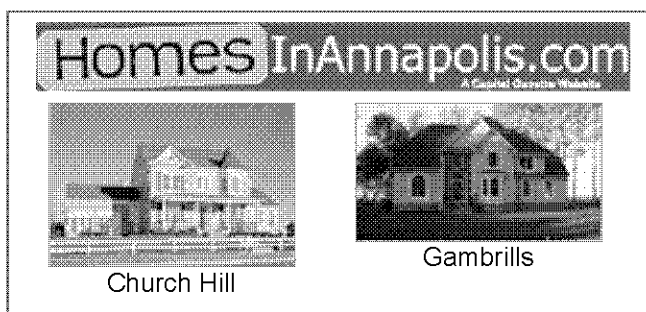
Impact fee debate is \$5 million question

Revenue estimate gives councilmen pause on eve of vote

By ERIN COX, Staff Writer

Published November 02, 2008

The joke told around the County Council chambers these days is that children are conceived and brought into the world faster than officials forged a compromise in the impact fee debate.



But as tomorrow's deadline approaches, the compromise appears to be unraveling and some believe the next generation of children will begin walking and talking before any meaningful deal is struck.

To supporters, the health of the county's infrastructure is at stake. To those against the deal, this plan sacrifices too much for too little gain.

County Auditor Teresa Sutherland this week calculated that the compromise would cost the county \$5.5 million over the next two years. The revelation prompted more doubts in the minds of the two councilmen who say they're undecided on whether to vote for the bill, which is expected to fail without support from one of them.

"We're going to lose money," said Councilman Jamie Benoit, D-Crownsville, adding that in the current economic climate, that's "just not the right thing to do."

"When you're in an economy as pressed as this one, and when you're in a county that needs money the way we do, it's a very difficult decision to walk away from \$5 million," said Councilman Daryl Jones, D-Severn.

Councilmen, policy makers and many developers agree Anne Arundel's impact fees

are set too low, making the gap too large between what developers pay to expand schools, roads and public safety buildings and the actual cost to build them.

The county administration and the council have debated how much and how quickly to increase the fees since January, employing a nationally renown expert, assembling a team of citizen volunteers, and logging weeks in staff time to sort out the details.

Last month, the council approved a compromise that would lower fees for a year, bring them back to their current level for a year, then increase them in 2011 to an amount more than double the current rate. The idea was promoted as an "economic stimulus" to save construction jobs, and set the final fees at rates that would generate an extra \$9.9 million when in full effect, according to Ms. Sutherland's calculations.

But as that debate comes to a final vote at 7 p.m. tomorrow at the Arundel Center in Annapolis, Mr. Benoit and Mr. Jones are hesitant to sign on. Others don't believe the decline in revenue is large enough to abandon a solution to a problem that everyone agrees need to be solved.

"I don't think (the drop) is significant enough not to go forward with this compromise," said Councilman Ed Reilly, R-Crofton, one of the bill's three co-sponsors.

Meanwhile, County Budget Officer John Hammond said Ms. Sutherland's figures are "a little bit overblown" because they're partly based on the assumption that the building industry will keep the same pace it had during the last fiscal year.

"In reality, there is not as much building and activity going on in fiscal year 2009" which began in July and ends June 2009, Mr. Hammond said. "Realistically, it's not in the cards."

[Close this window](#)



[Contact Us](#) | [Register](#) | [Send Us News Tips](#)
[Capital Gazette Newspapers](#) | 2000 Capital Dr. | Annapolis, MD 21401 | 410-268-5000

[HometownAnnapolis.com](#) | [HometownGlenBurnie.com](#) | [BowieBlade.com](#)

[Subscribe](#) | [Buy a Newspaper](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Restaurants](#) | [Local Web Directory](#)

[Archives](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Cars & Boats](#) | [Hotels & Lodging](#) | [2008 Readers Choice Awards](#)
| [Multimedia](#) | [Photo Store](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Tour Annapolis](#) | [Traffic Cams](#) | [USNA](#) | [Weather](#)

Copyright © 2008 Capital Gazette Communications, Inc. , Annapolis, Md. | [Privacy Policy & Terms of Service](#)