



## Public safety impact fees up for discussion in Windham

By Terry Date  
Staff writer

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WINDHAM — Some say impact fees are eminently fair. Others say they are punitive.

On Wednesday, the Planning Board will take comment at a public hearing before voting on whether to adopt public safety impact fees.

If approved, the fees would be charged to new residential construction — ranging from about \$1,000 to \$1,600 depending on the type of residence being built. The fees would offset the impact on future police and fire facilities, such as building expansion.

Selectman Margaret Crisler supports the fees and says they are fair to existing residents because these people have already paid for the existing fire station, police station, or school in town. It would be unfair, she says, to charge them again for the additional demand that newcomers place on those services.

"When we were smaller we didn't need a high school," she said. "It is the growth of the town that has created the demand."

But Charles McMahon, a state representative and selectman candidate, calls residential impact fees punitive and abusive to newcomers.

"Taxation ought to be with representation," he said. "I don't think they would vote to pay a penalty for moving into town."

Planning Board member Walter Kolodziej says the fee is actually a tax.

"Let's call them what they are," he said

Kolodziej agrees with McMahon that the town should welcome and help those moving in, not hinder them by implementing additional fees.

Planning Board member and selectman candidate Ross McLeod says to call the impact fee a tax is a misnomer. A tax is a monetary charge the government uses to raise revenue. Fees are for procurement.

Furthermore, he said, not charging impact fees would make it that much harder to build the high school and purchase fire and safety equipment.

Windham already has school impact fees on the books, having approved them a decade ago and collected about \$2.4 million in total since then. The school impact fee on a new single-family home is

\$3,400.

The town commissioned impact fee consultant Bruce Mayberry last year for \$10,000, half paid by the town and the other half by the Rockingham Planning Commission, to study the public safety and recreation impact fees proposal.

Proposed recreation impact fees will be taken up at a later date.

Town Planner Al Turner said Windham is lagging behind other Southern New Hampshire towns when it comes to the amount of impact fees charged. Before adopting impact fees, a town must have a capital improvement plan, a master plan and a public hearing on the proposal.

Wednesday's hearing starts at 7 p.m. at the Planning and Development Department at 3 N. Lowell Road.

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