



New-home impact fee bill stirs up debate

By Dave Munday
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SUMMERVILLE — A bill that could put the cost of more schools around Summerville on builders is fueling a heated debate in Dorchester County.

It's part of an ongoing argument over who should pay for growth.

The housing market has slowed, but thousands of new houses have been approved around Summerville and North Charleston, and they will require at least a dozen new schools when construction picks up again.

Sen. Mike Rose, a Summerville Republican, pushed a bill through the Senate that allows the Dorchester District 2 School Board to impose impact fees on new houses to help build schools. Debate is expected to start in the House today.

[Sen. Mike Rose's bill](#) (Word Document)

Dorchester County residents have been urging for years a change in state law to allow schools to collect impact fees. This is the first time a proposal has made it through the Senate, mainly because it only applies to District 2.

Dorchester County Council and the School Board passed resolutions this week endorsing the bill. County Republican Party chairman Arthur Bryngelson and the Dorchester County Taxpayers Association also endorsed it.

Summerville Town Council's Planning Committee unanimously passed a motion Wednesday urging council to support the bill at its meeting next week.

The Charleston Trident Home Builders Association is against the proposal, Executive Vice President Phillip Ford said. There couldn't be a worse time than now to put an extra fee on struggling home builders, and the bill doesn't give a clue about what the cost could be, he said.

Reps. Annette Young and Jenny Horne, also Summerville Republicans, said they have also been hearing concerns and will amend the bill to put a \$2,500 limit on the impact fee.

The bill could be up for final approval in the House as early as Thursday.

Then it would go back to the Senate, and Rose would have to decide whether to accept the \$2,500 cap.

Young and Horne said Rose agreed to the cap when they ran the idea past him last week. But he said in phone conversations this week that the school board should be able to charge what it thinks is necessary to pay for new schools.

There's also some concern in the House that the bill is merely local legislation, which could threaten its chances, Young and Horne said.

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