



Monday, Feb 9, 2009

Posted on Mon, Feb. 09, 2009

Panel to debate third reading on housing impact fees

By Kelly Marshall Fuller

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Georgetown County Council members are poised to decide the fate of charging impact fees on construction of new houses to fund parks, libraries and road improvements.

County Council members can vote on the plan after debate on the measure's third reading when they meet on Tuesday.

The fees, which have angered some county residents, are to finance "pork barrel spending" in the capital improvements, said Litchfield resident Richard Weston.

He said the impact fees will add additional costs to building new homes and destroy the shaky real estate market in Georgetown County.

"It will just put the final nail in the coffin," Weston said.

"What they haven't looked at is the affordability factor. It will make everybody's taxes go up. The taxes have to go up to support all this stuff."

Weston has sent out posters asking county residents to appear at Tuesday's meeting.

A public hearing will be held Tuesday.

Weston said he plans to speak at the public hearing and the public input section.

The impact fees would help defray the costs of parks, libraries, roads and law enforcement associated with growth, according to the proposed ordinance.

Horry County does not have mandatory impact fees, but some developers have agreed to pay for infrastructure in their developments under voluntary agreements.

The money collected from the impact fees would help pay for the county's \$330 million Visions II Capital Improvement Plan.

Consultant Tyson Smith, who worked with the county to develop the impact fee, told residents the fee is different from a tax.

The impact fee will only be charged on new developments. It will not be charged against existing homeowners.

And the impact fee can only be charged to maintain a level of existing service, he said. It also must be returned if the county does not use it for the designated infrastructure project, according to Smith.

Councilman Ron Charlton cast the only dissenting vote after the proposal's second reading. He recommended providing other incentives to spur building.

"I am just suggesting to get this housing market moving, we need to look at any way possible to help with the fees that we charge like building permits," Charlton said.

"I just think we need to look at it hard. We're in a crisis. We need to get people working. We need to get the tax base moving."

If you go

What | Georgetown County Council meeting

When | 5:30 p.m. Tuesday

Where | Georgetown County Courthouse, 129 Screven St.

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