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Local

House speaker says homebuilders' impact fee bill raises unanswered concerns, likely to be delayed

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WASHINGTON -

Virginia [House Speaker Bill Howell](#) said homebuilders' proposal to overhaul the way they reimburse local governments for growth raises too many unanswered concerns to be passed this session.

"It really does need to be looked at for another year or two," Howell told The Examiner on Wednesday.

The measure that passed the Senate last week 21-19 dramatically reduces the cash "proffers" that developers pay governments to provide new schools and roads in some [Northern Virginia](#) communities from more than \$35,000 to \$12,500 across the region and \$7,500 in the rest of the state.

While government leaders have argued the proposal would leave local governments without the money needed for new classrooms and local roads, homebuilders and some lawmakers say the current cash fees have made new houses too expensive.

Although Howell left open an avenue for the bill to be passed, it appears unlikely his conditions could be met due to the strong opposition of local governments.

"What it would take is to have the [Virginia Association of Counties](#) and the [Virginia Municipal League](#) to come to me and say, 'Bill, we think this is a great idea,' " Howell said. "I don't think that's going to happen." Both groups have publicly opposed the bill.

But builders remain determined to resolve concerns with the proposal, said [Jim Williams](#), executive vice president of the [Northern Virginia Building Industry Association](#).

"The system is broken. There's no reason not to pass it," he said. "The speaker wanted to keep the two sides talking."

Any delay should not suggest the issue is dead, said [Del. Kris Amundson, D-Fairfax](#), who wants to overhaul the system but has numerous concerns about the homebuilders' proposal in its current form.

"The state needs to take a comprehensive look at how we ask developers and local governments to apportion the costs of growth," she said. "We're down here only [through March 8], we can't get this done."

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