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# Impact fee on new homes approved in Harford Co. (Aberdeen Proving Ground)

## School-construction levy to rise 27% over 2 years

By Ted Shelsby  
Sun Staff

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After three months of deliberation, the Harford County Council approved legislation last night imposing an impact fee of \$6,000 on new single-family homes to help pay for school construction.

The council finally settled on the amount for the fee, which has been adjusted twice since it was introduced in March. Before approving the bill on a 5-2 vote, the council passed an amendment that would boost the fee by about 27 percent over the next two years, restoring it to the amount established in the original language.

The legislation dictates that the fee on a single-family home would be increased to \$7,442 on July 1 next year and rise to \$8,269 on July 1, 2007.

For a townhouse or duplex, the fee starts at \$4,200, then jumps to \$5,148 and \$5,720 over the next two years. For all other dwellings, including mobile homes, the fee starts at \$1,200 and rises to \$1,473 next year and \$1,637 in 2007.

The fee is paid by homebuilders when obtaining a building permit. Typically, such costs are passed on to the homebuyer in the form of higher prices.

Councilmen Dion F. Guthrie and Lance C. Miller voted no.

"It's not fair for someone 55 years old with no children to pay an impact fee," said Miller.

Guthrie said he would rather have a higher transfer tax that would have been paid by buyers of new and existing homes.

*Lucky taxpayer?!*

In voting for the bill, Councilman Robert G. Cassilly pointed out that the county charges a fee on new homes to help pay for sewage and roads.

The amendment to increase the fees over the next two years is similar to a measure that failed on a 3-3 vote last month. The vote was taken when Councilwoman Cecelia M. Stepp, who had supported the higher fee, was absent.

*Who's going to Relocate from Fort Monmouth*

*No one*

The fee represents the council's response to public complaints in recent years about crowded public schools that need repairs.

Angry Harford residents packed the council chamber last year complaining about schools that have 20 percent to 25 percent more students than they were designed to handle. Residents also complained about leaking roofs, growing use of portable classrooms, climate-control problems and mold on walls and ceilings.

The new fee does not apply to a replacement home, such as for one destroyed by fire. It also does not apply to senior housing or homes built by nonprofit organizations for low-income families.

Harford is the latest among fast-growing counties in the Baltimore area to impose an impact fee or excise tax to help pay for schools, roads and other infrastructure improvements associated with development.

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