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APFO fee increase up for vote

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Increasing the fee collected from new housing projects to offset the cost of new schools would not be prudent at a time when the housing industry is floundering, commissioner Grace Mynatt said Monday.

The Cabarrus County Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance requires developers to pay a mitigation fee of \$8,617 per single-family home and \$4,570 per townhouse. The fee helps pay for the cost to build new schools necessary because of the new families the homes draw to the area.

At their Jan. 20 meeting, commissioners will consider an increase of about 8 percent to that fee, making it \$9,279 per single family home and \$4,921 per townhouse.

"We are in a time when the housing market is declining," Mynatt said during a Cabarrus County commissioner work session Monday afternoon.

"I think the prudent thing to do this year would be to waive the increase," Mynatt said.

Commissioner Chairman Jay White agreed with Mynatt, but said the issue would still have to be placed on the Jan. 20 agenda for a formal discussion and vote.

In June 2004, Cabarrus County received special permission from the N.C. Legislature to use an adequate public facilities ordinance to address school facility needs when it reviews new subdivision requests.

Cabarrus County's residential growth has forced the county to build 16 public schools in the last 10 years, costing approximately \$262 million. Another 18 new schools are expected to be built in the next 10 years, according to county officials.

The increase in students in Cabarrus County has been linked to the construction of about 25,000 new single family homes since 1998.

To offset that cost, the commissioners ask subdivision developers to make voluntary mitigation payments through the county's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance. The county asks developers to contribute at least 65 percent of the cost the county will incur to build a new school. The ordinance affects housing developments in areas where student enrollment exceeds 110 percent.

As of July, the county had collected about \$5.2 million from the mitigation payments to be used toward new school construction, according to county records. By 2013, the county expects to have collected \$11.5 million through the fees.