



Council to face impact fee foes

By Andrew Dys The Herald

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The Rock Hill City Council approved spending \$3 million to expand the proposed Manchester Meadows soccer complex Monday night, yet faces stiff opposition from real estate agents and builders on proposed impact fees.

City staff has suggested impact fees as a way to pay for the infrastructure costs of new growth. Property groups, however, say impact fees will cost the city in luring homeowners and businesses. They asked the council to consider alternatives and have city staff meet with them before action is taken.

The city's planning commission is set to act on impact fees next Tuesday and then send a recommendation to council. The draft ordinance is not yet ready for public view and the property group wants sufficient time to look over the ordinance first.

Butch Brindel, chief executive officer of the Piedmont Regional Association of Realtors, said a sales tax hike or revenue bonds are options that should be considered. "There are other ideas out there, and we just want to make sure they are considered," Brindel said. "Everybody benefits from growth -- everybody ought to pay for it."

Councilwoman Maxine Gill said she doesn't like impact fees, but the city has seen deficits of more than \$1 million each of the past three years from infrastructure costs resulting from growth.

"I don't like any fee, but there has to be some money from somewhere to pay for things," Gill said.

Real Estate and Building Industry Coalition Regional Director Tim Morgan, former president of the York County Regional Chamber of Commerce whose present firm has been hired by the Realtor group, told council impact fees are regressive, could stifle downtown redevelopment and make Rock Hill less competitive as a site for prospective businesses to locate. The coalition represents building interests in the Charlotte metropolitan area, including York County.

The council unanimously approved adding approximately \$3 million to the soccer complex cost to make the site more attractive for money-making tournaments. The 2-cent prepared-food tax the council passed earlier this year is expected to pay for the now \$10.3 million complex.

The council also unanimously approved paying \$30,000 to hire a consultant to assist with planning for the Arcade Mill neighborhood.

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