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## School Impact Fee Reduced

By *DAWN WADE, Staff Writer*

Those thinking of building a house have found the right time, as Polk County commissioners voted last week to reduce the school impact fee, as requested by the county school board.

The new impact fee, in effect now for a single family home, is \$4,171, a significant savings over the 2006 school impact fee of \$6,006.

The reduction comes in response to funding from the Legislature for the class size amendment, which the school board was not expecting.

“Are you sure this funding is set in stone?” Commissioner Randy Wilkinson said. “Are they going to cut \$1.5 billion from other sources, like Polk County?”

The school district did not include funding from the state for meeting the class size requirements in its budget, and after receiving the funding asked for the reduction. This also has happened in past years.

Commissioner Bob English questioned the validity of creating the impact fee and reducing the fee year after year.

“I don't think the way the state is doing this is fair, because by the time you buy the home you can pay a different fee depending on the time and what the Legislature does,” English said. “Let's not have that escalator. Let's impose a standard fee and not include the portion for class size amendment.”

Other commissioners agreed the plan seemed unfair, and Myers cited the fact the Florida Builders Association had sued the state for that very reason.

Myers said the fee was set because the Polk County School Board chose to comply with the law, and then make adjustments, rather than risk non-compliance.

Commissioner Jean Reed requested the matter be opened for public comment, but English said he would rather that not happen, and called the question.

All voted to reduce the fee.

Wilkinson said he estimated the impact fee would be \$3,800 without any regard for class size amendment funding.

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