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## School impact fees may get a twist

### Proposal aims to better distribute burden among home builders

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September 6, 2007

The Osceola school district has been presented with a proposal that would give an automatic impact-fee credit to home builders who donate land to the district.

The deal would eliminate a component that takes into account estimated land values -- including land donations -- from the current impact-fee calculation formula.

If approved, the proposal would also raise impact fees by approximately \$513 for a single-family home.

The fee is currently set at \$9,981 for single-family homes.

Backed by the Growth Management Task Force, which is made up of members of Osceola's business community, the idea was communicated to School Board members by district consultant Randy Young last week.

Young is the expert hired by the district to recalculate impact fees, and the task force was asked for comment.

Task force member John Adams said the proposal would more evenly distribute the burden home builders carry as schools are built and developments are approved.

"This is more fair and equitable . . . it's a consistent way to do business," said Adams. "Usually, the first guy in the door [developer] gets clobbered and everyone else behind them benefits. This way, everybody pays the same."

Louis Witherington, chairman of the Osceola chapter of the Metro Orlando Home Builders Association, said his organization supported the idea of better cost distribution among developers.

Under the current proposal, credit would be given only to those who donate land to the school district rather than to all developers, who currently benefit from land donation estimates used in the impact fee formula.

The proposal must obtain School Board approval before going to the county.

It is not clear yet whether board members will go along with the plan.

In 2003, the last time the county voted on the school fee, county commissioners approved estimates provided by the school district without modifications.



On Tuesday, several expressed concerns that such an impact fee recalculation would discourage land donations to the school district, causing it to lose badly needed money for construction.

"I'd like to have more information," said School Board member Tom Greer. "I don't want the school district to wind up short."

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