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- Home Page
- News Desk
- Editorial Cartoon
- Staff
- Awards
- Advertisers
- Rates
- Contact Us

- Admin Access  
News / CMS

## News Desk

[Home /](#)

[Send To Friend / Print Article](#)

### \$1500 impact fees are adopted

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The area's first impact fees are now in place after Baker County commissioners passed them into law at their October 17 meeting. After the ordinance is registered in Tallahassee, new residential construction will be charged \$1500 per home in order to fund additional transportation infrastructure, and primarily roads needed to serve people who will live in those homes.

The fee will be assessed when the building permit is pulled, or in the case of mobile homes, when the move-on permit is purchased.

Impact fees are levied on new construction, residential and commercial, and are intended to help pay for additional roads, also schools, police and fire services that coincide with growth.

Baker County's impact fee ordinance also applies to the town of Glen St. Mary.

Baker County's school board and City of Macclenny have yet to establish their fees, although city commissioners agreed informally last week to levy a fee of \$2777, and the school board is leaning toward \$1000.

Unlike the county and Glen, where the fee is strictly for transportation, the city will collect different amounts for five different categories – \$880 for transportation, \$704 for law enforcement, \$300 for emergency management, \$678 for fire service and \$215 for recreation.

The school board's fee will be for educational infrastructure, such as new schools or buses.

County officials had wanted to have a fee ordinance in place by July 1, but slowed things down after citizens complained about the the original amount of \$3432.

There was no discussion of the ordinance before the commission voted 4-1 to approve it.

Chairwoman Julie Combs was the dissenting vote.

"Nobody ever convinced me [impact fees] could be effective," she said.

"My biggest fear is that the county would not have the funds to pay for the infrastructure projects we commit to."

It is generally agreed that impact fees do not pay nearly all the costs associated with growth.

Also at Monday's meeting, commissioners:

- Approved the hiring of Patricia Bass to answer phones and process paperwork in the building and zoning department. Ms. Bass will work for Planning Director Cathy Rhoden.

- Voted to have the county attorney write an appeals process into the recently passed ordinance establishing a Local Planning Agency. The amendment will funnel appeals to circuit court. Commissioners also agreed to a three-month educational process to bring agency members up to speed on issues and regulations. County staff is currently reviewing applicants for the agency and the appointments should be known next month.
- Accepted an additional grant of \$191,000 for the county's Watershed Grant Project, which is attempting to correct a drainage problem in the area of Miltondale Road. Adding a prior grant and the county's \$50,000 of in-kind service, brings the project's funding to \$306,000.

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