



## Barrow County commissioners study impact fees

ATHENS, Ga. The Barrow County Commission has taken the first step toward studying the idea of impact fees.

The commission voted last week to hire someone to begin to answer questions including who would be charged, how much to charge and what to spend the money on.

An impact fee is a charge assessed by local governments against new developments and used to pay for projects that benefit the public, such as road work, libraries and parks.

Proponents of impact fees rather than higher property taxes argue the fees are paid by new residents moving to a particular area who need services such as water and sewer lines and police protection.

But the executive vice president of the Barrow County Builders Association -- Ed Phillips -- says that's NOT the case. He says the fees are included in the cost of a new house whether the buyer is new to the area or a lifelong resident.

After a consultant completes its review, the commission would still have to decide whether to levy the impact fees.

The state Department of Community Affairs says 33 governments statewide had some type of impact fee in place at the first of the year. The city of Jefferson in Jackson County is among the most recent in the state to levy the fee.

Under Jefferson's fee structure, developers pay 12-hundred, 93 dollars for each dwelling unit -- including single-family residences, an apartment or a townhouse. The city is using the impact fees to pay for a new park.

Under Braselton's structure, the town charges impact fees on new construction, including residential, commercial and industrial developments. The city uses the fees for police and library projects.

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