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Posted on Thu, Aug. 18, 2005

## Dearing request: max fees

MICHAEL BARBER  
Herald Staff Writer

**MANATEE** - Following the county commission's lead, Superintendent Roger Dearing said Wednesday that he will ask the Manatee County School Board to approve a resolution asking for the maximum legally defensible impact fees to be collected on the sale of new homes beginning Oct. 1.

On Tuesday, county commissioners said they would seek the highest impact fees they can collect under a consultant's advisory opinion that those impact fee amounts would withstand a legal challenge.

"The impact of growth is hitting the county and us significantly," Dearing said. "We can't build the classrooms needed to keep up with growth because the cost of construction keeps going up."

School impact fees are used for capital needs, primarily for construction of new schools and renovations or additions to existing schools. Impact fees are a one-time charge on new home construction.

Current school impact fees are \$4,088.25 for a single-family detached home; \$2,742.75 for a townhouse or duplex; \$1,190.25 per apartment or multifamily unit; and \$316.25 for mobile homes.

If approved, the maximum defensible impact fee rates would be \$5,886 for a single-family detached home; \$3,987 for a townhouse or duplex; \$542 for a mobile home; and \$1,760 for all other residential units.

Local home builders oppose impact fees in general and the maximum rates specifically. However, Bambi Spahr, executive director of the Home Builders Association of Manatee County, said she feels like the county commission and school board have already decided to go after the highest impact fees possible.

"I think it's unfortunate, and I think it's ill advised, but I'm not surprised," Spahr said. "Anytime they raise the price of new housing they raise the price of all housing in the county, so they make it more difficult for some buyers to afford a home."

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The school board already approved a resolution asking the county commission to advance a scheduled increase in impact fee rates from June 2006 to Oct. 1. While the school board can ask for impact fees to be enacted, the county commission has voting authority over the issue.

The county commission is expected to vote on raising impact fee rates Tuesday, so Dearing said he will ask the school board to approve the maximum rates at Monday's regularly scheduled board meeting. Since the agenda for Monday's meeting was already set prior to Wednesday, Dearing said he'll ask the board to add the item as a good-cause exception.

"We are in a position that we can't keep up with growth," said board member Larry Simmons. "This is a resource that is available to us and we should take advantage of it."

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