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Burnham may fuel Port St. Lucie impact-fee hike

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PORT ST. LUCIE — A \$2,081 increase in impact fees to support economic development will be considered by Port St. Lucie City Council members Monday night in a step they hope will pave the way for The Burnham Institute to locate a biomedical research laboratory here.

Port St. Lucie and Orlando are being considered as locations for the California-based organization to build a new laboratory.

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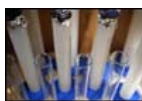


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The higher public-building impact fee on new-home construction could raise \$70 million for the city to build a laboratory it would lease to Burnham. That's close to the \$80 million Burnham reportedly wants from the city.

"If Burnham decides to come here, we'll be ready to go," Vice Mayor Pat Christensen said. "If they go to Orlando, we won't impose the fee."

A decision is expected by the end of this month.

Burnham representatives will be in Orlando next week to see the Lake Nona development, which is offering land for the institute.

They'll travel from California to Orlando in style aboard the Orlando Magic basketball team's Boeing 737, according to the *Orlando Sentinel*.

Orlando officials hope to bounce back from losing The Scripps Research Institute, which three years ago chose Palm Beach County.

The Port St. Lucie Planning and Zoning Commission unanimously recommended Tuesday that the public-building impact fee be increased to lure Burnham.

"New residents need parks and roads, so we have those impact fees," Christensen said. "They need jobs, so we could have this fee to provide employment."

She said the city encourages large developers to include commercial centers for employment along with houses.

Consultant Hank Fishkind told city officials they can impose the fee if they show that new-home buyers create the need for economic development projects and that the home buyers receive a direct benefit from the fee.

Burnham is negotiating with developers of Tradition to build on 75 acres near Gatlin Boulevard and Interstate 95.


Burnham could be just the first biotech company to locate there.



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