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City briefed on impact fees

ARCADIA -- The county and the School District are already well into discussions about establishing impact fee systems to help finance growth and development costs. Arcadia has now decided to test the waters.

At Tuesday's council meeting, the council invited County Administrator Craig Coffey to discuss the possible effects such a system would have on the city.

"It's going to help the city enormously," Coffey said.

He said impact fees would be lower in the city than in the county.

The city suffers from a chronic shortage of revenue and the enacting of impact fees by the county could provide a financial boost for the city, officials said.

City Administrator Ed Strube was reluctant to jump on the impact fees bandwagon. He said there were a number of issues concerning impact fees that might not have a positive effect on the city.

"This is a complex issue," he said. "We just want to make the council aware of that."

Impact fees are expenditures that developers are required to make as a precondition to board approval of their project. Impact fees are generally used to finance roads, schools, transit systems and other public projects.

The fees are frequently passed on to purchasers in the price of a new property and tend to increase the cost of housing and decrease the profitability of a project.

Strube had recommended to the council that it solicit proposals to conduct an impact fee study for the city that would focus on the feasibility of such a fee system. "The jury is still out on impact," he said.

The council decided to hold off on a study until staff could explore the possibility of

using the county and school district consultants for the city.

Also at Tuesday's meeting:

* The council conducted a second reading of an ordinance amending the city's Police Officers and Firefighters Retirement System and unanimously approved it. The ordinance requires a third reading.

* City Marshal Charles Lee reported the fines and forfeitures for the month of January 2006. The accounts show \$2,345 for fines collected.

* The council approved a recommendation to solicit consultant proposals to perform a water and sewer rate study. The last study was performed in the 1980s.

* The council agreed to sponsor a \$30,000 Enterprise Florida Inc. Rural Infrastructure Fund grant application for the Arcadia Rodeo Association's new facility financial feasibility study.

* The council approved a proposed letter of agreement with Historic Property Associates Inc. for a historic-builder survey and the development of architectural design guidelines in the city's Historic District.

* The council approved all of the recommendations from the Feb. 15 Planning and Zoning Board meeting.


* The council approved a proposal by the Arcadia Fire Department to contract with the city's existing ambulance billing software provider for ambulance billing and collection services.

* The council authorized a third amendment to the consent order between the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the city regarding Arcadia's wastewater treatment facility.

The council provided specific authorization with Boyle Engineering Corporation for professional engineering services to replace the hurricane-destroyed elevated water storage tank with a ground storage tank.

By JOHN LAWHORNE

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