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Commissioners To Consider Lower Jail Impact Fee For Housing, New Fee for Commercial Development

By DAWN WADE, Staff Writer

As the budget season nears, Polk County commissioners are considering an update to the jail impact fee.

And residential developers will be getting a break if the proposed new rate is approved.

Impact fees are levied on new construction to assist in paying for county or city facilities that the new development will use. Impact fees are often imposed for roads, schools, sewer and water, and Polk County has just approved new impact fees for parks and for libraries, and raised the impact fee for emergency medical services.

And now commissioners are looking at the jail services.

"In the past, the jail impact fee has only been imposed on residential development, but we are now looking at commercial and industrial development," Randy Young, of Henderson, Young and Co., who conducted the study, told the commission.

A change that will bring down the residential fee, but would levy jail impact fees for business development.

"Our total revenue will increase significantly. I don't want to mislead people into thinking the rate is going down," Commission Chm. Jack Myers said.

Initial estimates are that the county will go from collecting \$1 million in jail impact fees to \$1.8 million in the next fiscal year.

The impact fee for residential development is determined by the annual cost per jail bed (\$1,021) divided by the number of incidents per bed per year (18.06) to get a total cost per incident (\$56.56).

Then, the average number of incidents at homes (11,462) is divided by the number of homes in the county (135,215) to get a total of incidents per home (.08477).

The total of incidents per home (.08477) is multiplied by the cost per incident (\$56.56) to determine the cost per home per year (\$4.79).

The cost per year (\$4.79) is then multiplied by the number of years the Internal Revenue Service says the home will be in use (27.5) to come up with a life cost (\$131).

That total of \$131 is a decrease of \$21 from the fee Polk currently imposes on

residential customers.

Of the counties in the state that impose jail impact fees, Polk's is the highest, but the new rate will bring the county under Marion County, who now is second highest at \$140.

Commercial development will pick up the slack.

Using the same formula, the consultant determined that offices should pay 19 cents per square foot, retail establishments should pay 50 cents per square foot, and restaurants and bars should pay \$1.48 per square foot.

The wide disparity of the numbers comes from differences in the number of arrests leading to jail at the different types of businesses and the number of businesses in each category to share the burden.

Schools and colleges, public and private, will be expected to pay \$1.01 per square foot, a number that surprised some commissioners.

"I'm not saying this is students," Young told the commission. "I am sure that most often it is not."

When questioned further by Commissioner Randy Wilkinson, Young said the number reflected anyone arrested, leading to jail, on school grounds, including sporting events and other activities.

A public hearing on the proposed new fee will be held on July 13.