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Printed on page B4

\$11 per new house cut

County Commission Reduces School Impact Fees

By [Tom Palmer](#)
THE LEDGER

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BARTOW | Polk County commissioners will decrease school impact fees slightly.

Commissioners voted unanimously Wednesday to accept the latest consultant study but adopted 44 percent of the recommended rate.

That will mean a fee of \$4,160 for a new single-family home.

Wednesday's hearing was called in response to the latest school impact fee study, which was presented in April.

Consultant Randy Young told commissioners at that meeting that impact fees should be increased from \$4,171 to \$9,456 for a new single-family home.

He didn't change that projection Wednesday, saying, "\$9.5 million is the cost of serving 1,000 new homes." He was referring to the recommended rate, adding that if the commission adopts a lower rate, the taxpayers will have to pick up the difference.

"It's a tough economy for the builders, but it's a tough economy for everyone else, too," he said.

Young said letting classrooms simply become more crowded isn't an option because state law requires limits on the number of students per classroom.

However, Polk County School Board members told commissioners they would be willing to forgo the increase as long as commissioners agree to keep the fees at the current \$4,171 level.

School Board Chairman Kay Fields said she wanted commissioners to review the fees in a year and consider adjusting them then.

County Commissioner Jean Reed made a motion to ask for a one-year review, but it failed 3-2.

She and Commissioner Randy Wilkinson were outvoted by Commissioners Bob English, Sam Johnson and Ed Smith.

Assistant Superintendent Fred Murphy said school officials will have to deal with it as well as possible, but added if Polk County doesn't have the funding to expand classrooms to meet demand, the state will reduce funding as a penalty.

But School Board candidate Terry Pittman asked commissioners to table consideration of any impact fees, arguing that taxes and user fees are preferable to impact fees as a way to finance capital projects.



Neil Combee, a former county commissioner, said the reason state funding isn't forthcoming is because the state has less money, too.

"Public money has been taken for granted," he said.

Combee said things need to change.

"We've got to lower our standards," he said.

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