



Apr 4, 2005

County explains laborious task of calculating impact fees

By FRED HIERS

fhiers@hernandotoday.com

BROOKSVILLE -- If Thursday's workshop on potentially doubling impact fees is any indication, builders appear to be unconcerned that their future clients will have to pay a far heftier bill to start construction of homes.

County officials outnumbered the half dozen builders who came to the impact fee workshop to discuss with planners why commissioners could now hike impact fees for single-family homes to \$10,134.

Planners explained in detail during the two-hour workshop the series of equations used to justify their rationale behind the proposal to boost impact fees more than 100 percent, making the meeting resemble a mathematics class more than a government meeting.

Impact fees are a one-time tax imposed on property owners building a home. Impact fees are not charged to residents buying previously owned homes.

The fees are meant to offset the impact new residents will have on local services.

Proposed impact fees are based on a variety of local social factors that help tabulate the lengthy equations, namely the county's current investment in infrastructure and the county's population.

Impact fees are divided into seven categories which commissioners can adjust as they see fit, up to the maximum proposed by planners.

The categories for impact fees are school, transportation, parks, libraries, public building, fire, ambulance and law enforcement.

County planner Paul Wieczorek explained to builders and officials at Thursday's meeting how he calculated the impact fees necessary to maintain existing levels of service for each category.

Wieczorek said that to calculate the school's proposed impact fees, he estimated the county's number of school children, the number arriving annually, how much school space each needed and the cost of building schools and buying the necessary land.

But Len Tria, who is a former commissioner and government liaison for local builders and realtors, said the fairest way was to first ask school officials what the school board's building plans were and base school impact fees on those estimates.

Wieczorek replied that method would require more speculation and was not the method most Florida counties used.

To tabulate road impact fees, Wieczorek calculated the cost of building roads and

estimated such travel characteristics as the average mileage most people drive to various destinations.

The same held true for parks and library impact fees in which Wieczorek calculated the departments' capital investments and cost to maintain the county's existing level of service in those two categories.

But Bayport resident Adrian Kilby said the county should do more study to ensure that residents even want the level of service the county offered.

"How many people actually use parks?" Kilby said. "We don't know the answer because we've never studied the question."

Parks Director Pat Fagan confirmed that no such study was made, but offered antidotal evidence the parks were often utilized.

Blaise Ingoglia of Hartland Homes, an area construction company, also complained that the county could not show that residents put the county's libraries to use.

"I've only been to the library once...and it did not seem to be full," Ingoglia said.

The last time the county raised impact fees was in 2002, boosting them to a total of \$4,798.

Five years before, in 1997, they were increased to \$2,914 for single-family homes.

Although some local builders say raising impact fees could discourage home construction in Hernando County, county records suggest otherwise.

The county's population increased steadily during the past two fee hikes, apparently undaunted by the increases and reaching the 150,000-population mark a year ago.

Planners will ask commissioners during their Tuesday board meeting to hold public hearings on the impact fee proposal May 3 and May 17.

Property owners can prepay impact fees before applying for building permits at today's rates and avoid paying higher rates later.

That would save some property owners more than \$5,000.

Reporter Fred Hiers can be contacted at (352) 544-5290.

This story can be found at: <http://www.hernandotoday.com/MGBM303P37E.html>

- [Go Back To The Story](#)