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- Travel Info
- TV Listings
- Weather
- Web Directory
- Wedding Planning
- White Pages
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### County hires new consultant

*By Bill Fabian, Glades County Democrat*

MOORE HAVEN — In a significant step forward towards bringing a profitable change to county policy, the Glades County Board of County Commissioners moved to actively investigate and authorize a strategic plan for implementing impact fees.

The move should prove to be a noteworthy decision, if the eventual use of impact fees is successful.

At the Glades BOCC meeting on Monday, July 25, the board began with a presentation by Dr. Jim Nicholas, an affiliate professor of Law at the Levin College of Law at the University of Florida. The presentation was scheduled on the agenda of the regular meeting, which was recessed and continued on Tuesday morning.

Dr. Jim Nicholas was hired and asked to prepare a study and survey that would advise the Board of County Commissioners as to how to properly adopt impact fees. Dr. Nicholas, who has extensive experience as an international expert in natural resource and land use management, will formulate the proper implementation of the impact fees, which must be in agreement with state legislative directives for infrastructure concurrency and Florida Department of Community Affairs regulations.

An Associate Director of UF's Environmental and Land Use Law Program, Dr. Nicholas has also been broadly versed in practicing and studying Florida growth management legislation, urban land economics, urban and regional planning, and environmental and urban problems.

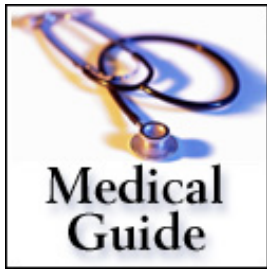
Dr. Nicholas emphasized the need to document the rationale for enacting the user fees to define the necessity of the impact fee structure, since a direct link between the initial impact fee payment from a taxpayer, and the service it funds, must be established.

Of the 32 of Florida's 67 counties, which have adopted impact fee ordinances, Osceola County collects the highest at \$14,000 per building permit issued for a single-family home, with \$1,250 being the lowest for Wakulla County.

Dr. Nicholas will be paid \$12,500, which will cover studying, compiling and reporting on the elements of Transportation and Public Safety, which encompasses Emergency Management, law enforcement, emergency medical, and fire protection.

Dr. Nicholas noted that because new growth affects other aspects of county-provided infrastructure, impact fees could also be imposed for Parks and





Recreation, library, public buildings, water and wastewater treatment facilities.

The State Legislature has already mandated that local governments will fund education costs, and should a county fail to provide the necessary funding of providing school concurrency with growth, the state will step in and take over, not to fund, but to impose additional tax burdens on county property owners.

Impact fees for schools are usually the highest part of the total fee charged. The cost of preparing the study of the public schools element is expected to be undertaken by Glades County School District.

Dr. Nicholas expects to have the study completed in 90 days, and noted that the gathering of numbers and information takes time, but crunching the information will go rapidly.

Dr. Nicholas received a doctorate degree from the University of Illinois. He received his undergrad and master's degrees from the University of Miami. He joined the faculty at UF Law School in 1985, served as co-director of Growth Management Studies, and was named as associate director of Environmental and Land Law Use Program in 1999.

He is also a UF professor of Urban and Regional Planning.

His professional affiliations include: American Planning Association, North American Society of Environmental Law, Urban Land Institute, American Bar Association, Omicron Delta Epsilon, Pi Mu Epsilon, and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

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