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County votes to raise road impact fees again

Board also will hire new consultant after failure to agree on fee formula.

**BY SUSAN LATHAM CARR
THE STAR-BANNER**

OCALA - The Marion County Commission on Wednesday voted unanimously to raise transportation impact fees again in January and to hire a new consultant to devise a formula that will shift more of the burden away from businesses and onto homebuyers.

The commission's decision came less than a week after interim road impact fees went into effect. On July 1, the fee for a single-family home was raised temporarily, to \$3,678 from \$2,212. Now, that fee will increase again, to \$5,143 in January.

The commission has been trying since 2005 to develop new road impact fees. They hired consultant Tindale-Oliver & Associates Inc. to help develop new rates.

In 2005, the consultant recommended that the county charge single-family homes \$5,143 per unit. But the commission did not like some of the rates the consultant recommended for businesses.

Commissioners said that residential development makes up about 90 percent of the building in the county and, as such, should pay a higher impact fee.

The commission continued to wrestle with the problem and, in May, voted to raise the rates slightly beginning in July. That increase would last six months while the consultant worked on developing a new formula.

But, apparently, the consultant was not meeting expectations and would not have a new formula by December, when the impact fee ordinance expires.

"I am not sure we are going to have a meeting of the minds," Commissioner Andy Kesselring told the commission about his meetings with Robert P. Wallace, Tindale-Oliver's vice president. "They just haven't been able to recommend any other way."

He said that a 20,000-square-foot doctor's office would cost \$300,000 in impact fees, and that businesses need some relief.

"I think every county - nobody is happy when the numbers come back," Commissioner Stan McClain said. "It has to be the methodology."

Kesselring suggested another consultant be hired. He also was concerned about the

loss of revenue for the county.

"Every month we don't collect the full amount of impact fees we are losing substantial dollars," Kesselring said. For that reason, he suggested that the rate be raised to Tindale-Oliver's original recommendation.

Commissioner Charlie Stone agreed with Kesselring, but he did not wish to raise the fees again to the full rate until January.

Commissioner Randy Harris was concerned that some businesses have put their plans in abeyance waiting for a final decision.

"Some are the very services we would like to see in areas to cut down on traffic driving into town," Harris said. He wondered if it would be possible to allow businesses to pay impact fees over three years.

"One of the sticking points was equal protection," Kesselring said, pointing to legal issues. "Tindale-Oliver didn't think you could do that. It has to apply to all land uses."

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County transportation impact fees

Jan. 1, 2007

\$5,143

\$2,869

\$2,247

\$592

\$6,491

\$26,184

\$29,540

\$3,102

July 1, 2006

\$3,678

\$2,052

\$1,607

\$423

\$4,642

\$18,724

\$21,124

\$2,218

Single family, per dwelling

Multi-family (1-2 story) per dwelling

Mobile home park, per dwelling

Middle school, per student

Office (50,001-100,000 gross square footage) per 1,000 sq.ft.

Restaurant, per 1,000 sq.ft.

Bank w/drive-in, per 1,000 sq.ft.
General Industrial, per 1,000 sq.ft.
Source: Marion County Commission
Bellevue studies recreation impact fee 1B

County continues: Board says fee proposal hurt businesses. **4A**
