

[TODAY'S CLASSIFIEDS](#)

[COMMUNITY CONTACTS](#)

[COMMUNITY BLOGS & LINKS](#)

[OTHER NEWSZAP COMMUNITIES](#)

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Archives
- Auto Buyers Guide
- Classifieds
- Entertainment
- Financial Planning
- Greeting Cards
- Health News
- Horoscopes
- Lottery
- Maps
- Medical Guide
- Meet Someone
- Movie Listings
- My Page
- National News
- Obituaries
- Remembrances
- Stocks
- Travel Info
- TV Listings
- Weather
- Web Directory
- Wedding Planning
- White Pages
- Yellow Pages



County wants impact fees Oct. 1

By Patty Brant, Clewiston News

LABELLE — As of Oct. 1, Hendry County hopes to take a big step toward preparing for the growth that everyone agrees is already in progress. At their Aug. 9 regular meeting, county commissioners agreed to set the county's first impact fees, covering road and educational infrastructure, at 100 percent of the recommended rate.

The ordinance to implement impact fees is expected to come up for a vote at the county commission's Sept. 13 meeting in Clewiston. All five county commissioners agreed that impact fees are essential in order to make development pay for itself. The only contentious issue was the level at which to implement those fees. In the end, the vote was 3-2 to impose the full amount.

For both cities of LaBelle and Clewiston the contentious issue has been the level. However, at their regular meeting on Aug. 11, LaBelle's city commission also opted to impose the full amount. The LaBelle commission had favored phasing in those fees. County Grants and Special Projects Director Ron Zimmerly appeared at the LaBelle City Commission meeting and also responded to the cities' concerns in writing.

Hendry County

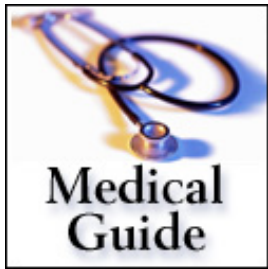
The county has been wrestling with implementing impact fees since 2003, seeking input from both cities. In fact, the county did incorporate the trip methodology suggested by the cities into the final computation.

Commissioner Kevin McCarthy shared concerns that in addition to forcing development to pay for growth, the suggested fees would also impose a burden on locals — for instance, a long time resident who builds a new home would be subject to them. He also felt the county should foster a more positive relationship with the cities.

Commissioner McCarthy favored the cities' view of implementing impact fees beginning at 50 percent, then phasing in larger percentages over time. He felt it would cost a little, but would result in the benefit of unified fees and improved relations with the cities. Commissioner McCarthy was concerned about the signal the county might send to the cities if, after seeing their input, the county did not heed their advice.

Commissioner Bill Maddox pointed out that "we're behind the eight ball," adding that impact fees are a "bitter pill" but one that has to be taken. He also noted that any plan to phase in impact fees at a lesser percentage is "totally impractical". Delaying impact fees for several years would only render it impossible for infrastructure to catch up with growth.





Commissioner Darrell Harris agreed, saying that other counties found it was a mistake to phase impact fees in.

When the vote was taken, Maddox made the motion to approve the 100-percent structure, Commissioner Harris seconded, and Commissioner Janet Taylor joined them to pass it. Commissioners McCarthy and Bo Pelham dissented.

The cities are not required to set their impact fees at the same rate as the county's, but they are being urged to for the sake of uniformity.

Cities

At the LaBelle City Commission meeting, Mr. Zimmerly explained that impact fees cannot be waived in areas like LaBelle's downtown historic district and Clewiston's CRA — one of the items both cities would have liked to see in the ordinance. However, they may be able to use a similar mechanism as Collier County, which pays the fee for qualified target industries.

The Hendry County Enterprise Zone may also offer one avenue for mitigating some impact fees. The zone is currently being renewed for 10 years.

Once implemented, road impact fees collected would be split between the county and city of LaBelle (42 percent for the county; 52 percent for the city of LaBelle) and 50/50 between the county and the city of Clewiston. These splits are based on the miles of collector and arterial roads in each city and in the county.

City of LaBelle commissioners unanimously approved implementing the road impact fees and educational impact fees at 100 percent, but look forward to working with the county on any unresolved issues.

The city of Clewiston remains in favor of phasing in impact fees, according to City Clerk Iva Pittman.

Bottom line

At 100 percent of the proposed figures, impact fees would increase the cost of an average single family detached home by \$2,490; attached housing unit \$1,526; multi-family unit \$1,729; mobile home \$1,252. Rates for businesses range from \$478 for a mini warehouse to \$14,094 for a fast food restaurant.

Educational impact fees are also part of this initial vote.

The educational impact fee schedule is as follows: \$5,100.63 for a single-family house; Multi-family unit: \$4,192.73; mobile home in a mobile home park \$2,314.83. These impact fees also passed with a vote of 4-1. Commissioner McCarthy was the lone dissenter.

Editor's note: Post your comment on this issue at <http://newsblog.info/0801/>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Want more local stories?



[Click here](#) to go to our Archives. Type in a key word like the same of your town where it asks for "word one". Then click "Start Search" to see other stories that have included your key word.

Blogs for & about local issues, groups, teams

[Click here](#) to go to our community blogs index page. Have your say or just sit back to read opinions and observations from your neighbors about public issues, our schools, community groups and local sports teams!

Area organizations are on newszap.com

[Click here](#) to go to our Community Contacts pages. Type in your town where it asks for a "city". Then click "Search Now".

Want regional classified ads?

[Click here](#) to go to our regional Classified Ads.

All Rights Reserved - Independent Newspapers, Inc. - [click here for INI info](#)
[Click here](#) for reprint permission and for our policies about privacy, links and objectionable content