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DeBary to talk about charging its first impact fees

City officials think the money is needed to pay for parks and a new City Hall.

Erin Ailworth
Sentinel Staff Writer

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Moving into DeBary may soon come with a higher price tag.

During today's 7 p.m. council meeting at Florence K. Little Town Hall, city officials are set to discuss implementing DeBary's first impact fees.

The one-time fees -- which are charged to new development -- would raise revenue to help pay for new public facilities such as parks and government buildings, according to a city memo.

DeBary City Manager Maryann Courson said "quick and dirty" calculations show that a park-impact fee alone could raise an estimated \$2 million to \$2.5 million, over its life, if not more. That's at least \$1,000 for each of the 2,000 to 2,500 units Courson said officials think can still be built in DeBary.

City staff has recommended that council members tonight approve spending \$38,196.56 for a five-month study by Tindale-Oliver & Associates that would look at the idea more closely. The consulting firm, which has offices in Orlando and Tampa, just completed an update of Deltona's impact fees and developed a government-building-impact fee for DeLand.

DeBary officials said that though past councils had elected not to implement impact fees, they wanted to look at ways to bring additional revenue into the city to help pay for upcoming projects such as a new City Hall and a planned skateboard park.

Mayor George Coleman said Tuesday such fees make sense because new development in the city means more people using city facilities.

"This way they pay their own way," he said by phone Tuesday night.

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Council member Patrick Fulton called the fees a "logical step" that needed to be considered in light of the improvements the city plans to make to update DeBary's stormwater infrastructure. The city suffered many flooding problems after the 2004 hurricanes, and bettering the stormwater system has since become a major issue.

Fulton said that because the money going to stormwater improvements would have been used in the past to fund things such as the new City Hall and parks, different sources of revenue needed to be identified.

That's where the impact-fee study comes in, Fulton added, because it will help ensure that "we do things right and we do things fair" if a fee is necessary.

Council member Jack Lenzen said he would support the fee if it proved feasible.

"We just have a lot on our shopping list," Lenzen said, "and I believe we need the revenue."

Erin Ailworth can be reached at eailworth@orlandosentinel.com or 386-851-7925.

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