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03/01/06

DeSoto County adopts impact fees

DESOTO COUNTY -- County commissioners voted on Tuesday to adopt an impact fees ordinance that could be in effect by May 1.

The board considered altering parts of the ordinance before voting, but decided instead to approve the ordinance as written and then consider amendments at a later date.

County Administrator Craig Coffey asked the board to take action immediately to prepare for rapid growth and development.

"We're going to be facing capital expenditures we've never imagined," he said.

Board members indicated months ago that they would prefer impact fees instead of a tax increase.

The fees are generally used to finance roads, schools, affordable housing, transit systems and other public projects. Developers pay the fees as a precondition to commission approval.

The fees are usually passed to home buyers in the prices of new properties and, therefore, tend to increase the cost of housing and decrease a project's profits. But many developers favor the fees because they provide infrastructure that promotes sales.

About half of the speakers at Tuesday's meeting favored the fees.

Topmost among the concerns expressed by audience members and the board was whether the impact fees would drive prices of homes higher than local residents could afford.

Commissioner Ronald Neads made the motion to adopt the ordinance with Commissioner Delma Allen seconding the motion.

The vote was 4--1 with Commissioner Felton Garner casting the dissenting vote.

"I'm against it now," Garner said. "This is too much at one time. Let's go back to the drawing board."

The board hopes to implement the impact fee system on May 1.

At its 3 p.m. meeting, the board took a number of actions including:

* The board voted to table consideration of an agreement for a deed between the county and a group of developers that would provide up to 200 acres of land as a site for a new wastewater treatment plant.

Deputy County Administrator Jody Kirkman said the developers and the county "have not come to a resolution."

The proposed wastewater treatment site is located on property adjacent to State Road 31, southeast of Arcadia and is referred to as the 2 X 4 Ranch. Under the agreement, developers would offer up to 200 acres to the county within a defined time period after the closing.

The proposed plant would be able to handle 2 million gallons per day and could be expanded to 4 million gallons per day.

* The board approved an agreement with the [Southwest Florida Water Management District](#) for the DeSoto Correctional Institution Re-use Feasibility Project. The anticipated cost is \$50,000.

* The board approved a work assignment with BCI Engineers for the County Road 761 bridge rehabilitation phase 1.

* The board adopted a resolution granting the Peace River/Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority the ability to proceed with the Regional Transmission System within DeSoto County.

* The board approved a bid for collection of delinquent emergency medical services accounts to National Finance Systems Inc.

* The board granted permission for a two-day outdoor event for an anniversary party on March 18 and March 19 at Bulldog's Roadhouse.

* The board approved the transfer of an excavation permit from Raymond Smith to Sandhill Group LLC.


* The board approved an excavation permit application form with Jerry Dodd as the operator on the property.

* The board approved a preliminary major plat for an approved planned unit development for a residential townhome subdivision totaling 208 units on 35 acres, located at the intersection of CR 761 and Lettuce Lake Avenue.

The minutes of each board meeting will be available at the county's Web site once they are approved.

By JOHN LAWHORNE

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