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DeLand to assess parks impact fee

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Last update: July 19, 2005

DELAND -- It's going to cost new homeowners \$1,000 more to live here after city commissioners agreed Monday to begin charging them for parks and recreation services.

The impact fee, approved unanimously, will take effect Oct. 24.

"We've talked about this for over a year," Mayor Bob Apgar said. "This is the only way to keep up our level of service and parks."

The fee for new single-family homes will be \$1,057 the first year and \$1,409 after Oct. 1, 2006. The fee is expected to generate between \$562,000 and \$600,000 in the first year, based upon current levels of construction.

One person spoke against the fees, saying there were too many already.

"This business of approving impact fees every time we turn around is a serious business," said apartment builder Austin Guirlinger. "There's already so many people who can't afford to buy new homes."

Guirlinger also said commissioners should consider the increased revenue the city will get from increased property taxes. But Apgar said it's not enough.

"The ad valorem increases are offset by increases in the cost of fuel and other things," he said.

Several other cities in Volusia County have park and recreation impact fees. They are used both to repair and upgrade existing parks and for the purchase of land for new parks. The first order of business in DeLand, Apgar said, was to find land the city can afford to buy, perhaps through cooperation with private or public entities.

In other matters, commissioners agreed to pay nearly triple what they expected to a year ago for a gravity sewer system along Adelle Avenue in Spring Hill. The construction bid for \$955,075 was granted to Progressive Contractors. The bid must still be approved by the state and county, both of which are pitching in for the project.

"This is another example of what's happening to everyone in terms of the rising costs of construction," Apgar said. "But there's nothing we can do about it."

Adelle is one of the main arteries in Spring Hill, an area along the city's southwest quadrant with many low-income residents.

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