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## Developer welfare in Hillsborough: Impact Fees (or lack of them)

November 3, 2009 at 12:28 pm by Kelly Cornelius



You probably already know that growth for itself and taxpayers are left holding the bill for things like roads, fire safety and what politicians would like you to believe. Impact fees should be funding these things even come close. In fact, according to a recent audit done by the Clerk of the Circuit they don't even fund the program it takes to monitor them!

An audit to be presented to the Hillsborough County Commission on Wednesday had disturbing findings including: **(my thoughts are in red)**

**Observation 1:** The BOCC has not been assured that the impact fees were spent as ordinance 96-29. **(WTF?)**

**Observation 2:** The current impact fee assessment for transportation, right of way, and networks may not be covering a reasonable percentage of the cost of growth within **think?)**

**Observation 3:** The County's Real Estate Dept does not charge a fee for their land and **county staff suggests we should get an appraisal on Cone Ranch costing a fortune**

Photo credit: [.res @Flickr.com](#)

Oh, those are not the only disturbing findings in the report. Some others include:

**Finding 1:** The costs to administer the program are not fully funded by the impact fees **they want us to approve a new 1% tax to pay for roads and rail.)**

**Finding 3:** Impact fees were incorrectly calculated and assessed. **(Even with our high counters?)**

**Finding 4:** Revenue from receipt of permitting fees could be lost or misappropriated **for another of Pat Bean's raises to herself or faves!**

**Finding 5:** Offset accounts can be overstated or unauthorized which can cause unnecessary accounting for the Impact Fee staff. **(Don't forget those furlough days!)**

You can see their full audit [here](#).

To add to that, [this FIELD report](#) shows that Hillsborough County only charges a mere legal limit for roads. Some elected officials are trying to get you to buy their spiel for pay for roads) by admitting we are billions behind in roads. Funny, I never heard some officials admit that while they were happily approving more sprawl.

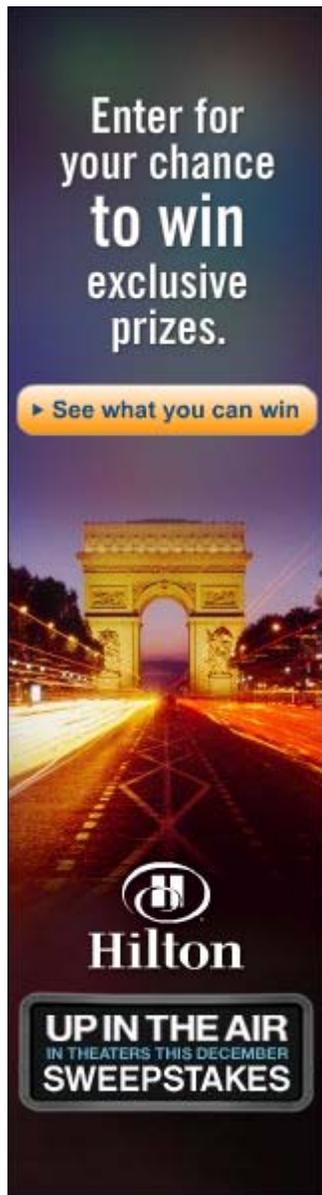
We *are* billions behind in transportation because of their past and current developer practices. Their sprawl-happy approvals of more rooftops has left us with congested home values and a flooded housing market. And while the state is slowly starting to recover with a boost in home sales, [Hillsborough still lags way behind](#).

Not to mention our County has a [history of not telling the truth about what developers](#) for roads anyway. You and I would probably call that lying, they would probably call miscalculating.

If our County Commission doesn't increase impact fees to meet the needs, then they are the welfare of the past which has contributed to the shortfalls of the present. You can see how they think giving developers a free ride on the backs of taxpayers with inadequate impact fees somehow adds up to being fiscally conservative, which many of them claim to be.

Commissioners should increase impact fees and show they are willing to make growth pay for itself. And they should do it before they have the nerve to ask us to tax ourselves to pay for their past sins, footing the bill for the infrastructure to catch up. Instead, what is the recent solution to the housing glut? As Mariella Smith informed us in [this article](#), it was to subsidize this practice of developer welfare by voting to increase impact fees. Now they want you to further subsidize this practice of developer welfare by voting to increase impact fees in part for roads via a 1% sales tax. Is that a pig I see flying by?

I am all for letting the people decide, in fact I am a big supporter of [Florida Hometown \(FHD\) Amendment 4](#), which, if passed will allow you and I to have the final say on these subdivisions instead of trusting our politicians to do it. When it comes to this "rail" re-authorization though, they need to be honest about just what they are asking us to tax ourselves for. Some might say it is the future, but considering that only [37% actually goes to rail according to this article](#) (and the rest goes to roads, buses and other non rail projects) I have to say that



tipped toward paying for past mistakes instead of the future. Seems more like a developer bailout to me.

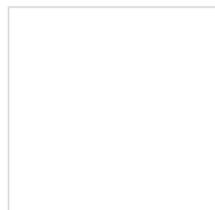
In addition I have not seen a plan that attempts to explain how we pay for the rest, e of federal contributions. Since the new administration in Washington seems to have 1 adaptation of that Doritos commercial — spend all ya want, we'll make more — mayb Ask the folks trying to keep [Tri-Rail on life support](#) in South Florida how easy it is to federal funding.

Oh and if you think it is bad that roads, fire and parks are underfunded by impact fe are not even charged [what it costs to go through the motions of a re-zoning or Comj amendment](#), only adding to their taxpayer-funded developer bailouts. Seems like pol rather have all taxpayers foot the bill than charge an appropriate fee for service to tl people were aware of this practice I wonder how much it would impact their vote to g an additional 1% sales tax to fund rail and roads.

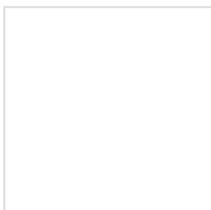
If the true rail proponents really want this to pass, I think they need to present us wit plan that includes: 1. Raising impact fees for developers to contribute to road costs ( wouldn't have to use so much of the proposed sales tax for that) 2. Provide a growth with rail that does not allow developers to amend it at the drop of a hat (or the writir contribution check).....give us the power of veto on the ballot even if FHD doesn't j the list on non-rail projects respectable instead of [controversial](#) or delete the list alto the full 1% for rail because even that is just a drop in the bucket anyway. Come on, e pushing rail in Hillsborough, make this effort worth supporting!

Ironically, the rail referendum discussion is also supposed to take place at Wednesda Commission meeting. I wonder if anybody will connect the dots from meager impact shortfall in road funding? Don't hold your breath.

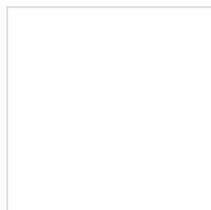
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**Dixie**

Didn't I just read where 50% of the referendum tax will go to non-rail? HMMMM - if that is so, then they better not try to peddle this as a rail referendum. Maybe they should just call it a Community Investment Tax - NO WAIT! - they already got us to vote for that and look what it got us.

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**FixHillsborough**

Bravo Kelly, you hit the nail right on the head. Our commissioners are going to be pushing this referendum as though it will save humanity, but the problem is that even if voters agree to higher taxes to pay for our BOCC's rubber stamping of development in the past, I haven't heard one of them say that they've learned a lesson from this and will not keep rubber-stamping, have you? If they don't make some hard commitments to the public that they will stop approving sprawl and make new development pay for itself, this referendum is gonna go the way of Championship Park!!!

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