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Developers in Newberry may face extra fees

NEWBERRY - Developers would pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in development fees next year under a proposal the City Commission endorsed during a meeting here on Monday.

In the first of two votes, the commission voted unanimously on Monday to charge developers a fee for each connection to the city's water and wastewater systems. Newberry would become the second municipality in Alachua County this year to impose development or impact fees, which are one-time charges on new construction that aim to make developers, not residents, pay for the side-effects of growth.

Newberry, a city of about 3,700 residents west of Gainesville, has approved thousands of new homes in the past few years, and city officials here said the fees underscore the explosive residential growth taking place in northwestern Alachua County.

"Development fees are pretty standard now across Florida, I'm afraid," City Manager Keith Ashby said. "Communities like ours just cannot absorb this kind of growth with ad valorem (property taxes)."

The development fees of \$755 per home for water and \$1,288 for wastewater could only be used to pay for improvements or expansions to its water and wastewater systems.

The city expects it would make nearly \$300,000 on development fees next year, Ashby said.

That's in addition to connection fees reduced from \$1,200 to \$350 per home for water and \$400 per home for sewer. Charges for businesses would be based on the equivalent number of homes based on water or wastewater usage.

Commissioner Susan Parker said she was pleased the city was able to reduce connection fees to whittle overall costs.

"If you take all four fees and add them up it comes to just barely over \$2,700 (per home). These are very, very reasonable fees to take care of the new

growth and infrastructure the city receives."

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