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Port St. Lucie mulls \$1,347 storm-water impact fee

By [Teresa Lane](#)

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

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PORt ST. LUCIE — The city could implement a \$1,347 impact fee on new homes east of Interstate 95 to improve the flow of rainwater after storms, a consultant said this week, but city council members said the figure may be too high in light of a \$2,082 impact fee adopted last week to lure biotech firms.



Council members endorsed a one-time fee on new buildings last year to help pay for millions in drainage repairs that were postponed after the storm-water account lost \$14.4 million in a class-action lawsuit in 2000.

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The development fee being considered is in addition to an annual \$114 storm-water assessment each homeowner pays to help maintain the city's complex drainage system of swales, canals and ponds.

Because impact fees can be used only to benefit future residents who pay them, fee consultant Walter Keller said money raised could be used to pay for \$1.9 million in citywide

improvements outlined in a capital improvement plan and \$4.2 million in upgrades east of I-95.

Because newcomers west of I-95 wouldn't benefit from most of the expenditures, the maximum a homeowner there could be charged is \$114, Keller said. Units in multifamily buildings east of I-95 would be assessed \$674, and those west of I-95 \$57. Nonresidential buildings would be taxed depending on their size.

Council members, who are set to discuss the impact fees at 7 p.m. Monday at city hall, said that the maximum allowable fee is higher than they expected and that they likely will reduce it. Council members agreed last fall to raise the annual storm-water assessments \$9 a year for two years to offset expenses, but said they can't justify a \$1,347 fee on top of the \$2,082 they approved last week to lure The Burnham Institute.

Overall, a new homeowner currently pays about \$11,700 in city, county and school impact fees. When the

public-buildings fee rises \$2,082 to cover Burnham, the total will rise to \$13,782. Any storm-water fee would add to that.

"I was thinking more along the lines of \$100 to \$400 a home," Councilwoman Michelle Berger said.

Mayor Bob Minsky was a little more blunt: "I don't think that's going to work. Not unless we're suicidal."

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