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Port Orange finds error, lowers fee for roads

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PORT ORANGE -- Traffic engineers and homebuilders found out this week they were right: Port Orange's math didn't compute.

Developers in May questioned how the city calculated its new road impact fee, saying it wouldn't be fair for the city to collect fees for improvements of 40 percent of its roads when Volusia County charged for 70 percent of many of the same roads. That, they argued, added up to 110 percent and a case of double taxation.

City officials instructed their consultant to look at the numbers again and determined Port Orange overshot its original estimate and should charge for only 24.7 percent of roads instead. That lowered the fee \$559, from \$1,461 to \$902 per single family home.

Greg Blose, government affairs director for the Volusia Home Builders Association, said his group is pleased with the compromise and may use the new configuration to challenge other road impact fees, including those in Edgewater and New Smyrna Beach.

"It's all about the math and the numbers that go into it," Blose said. "This could show that the distribution factor in other (cities) is too high."

City Manager Ken Parker said he worried the reduction -- which goes before the City Council on Tuesday for preliminary approval -- would give a perception that the city bent under developers' pressure. But he said the group brought up valid concerns that deserved to be investigated. And the city wanted to avoid a court battle.

"(The amount) is defensible," Parker said. "We didn't want to get into a situation where Port Orange and the county got into a conflict."

Final approval of the city fee could take place later this month and take effect Oct. 1.

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