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Proposed Impact Fee Faces Criticism

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BROOKSVILLE - Hernando County's proposed impact fee increase will charge future homeowners at least \$1,500 more than is warranted, says a consultant hired by the Hernando Builders Association.

Kirk Sorenson of Government Solutions said he found several errors and inconsistencies in the county's calculations that would charge new homeowners about \$10,200 in impact fees when they begin construction of their home.

Sorenson, and the builders' association that hired him, are asking for a 60-day delay to give Government Solutions more time to review Hernando County's impact fee data.

Impact fees are one-time taxes imposed on property owners when they build a home. The impact fees are earmarked to pay for services within the geographical areas where they are collected.

Hernando County commissioners doubled the fee meant to pay for new parks, roads, libraries, schools and other government facilities most recently in 2002 to \$4,894. They will hold their first of two public meetings today to discuss doubling them again to about \$10,200.

"The taxpayers would be in an uproar if that happened with property taxes," Sorenson said.

And with so much at stake, shouldn't commissioners give more time for review, he asked.

If the proposed impact fees are approved, Sorenson says the county will overcharge property owners between 25 percent and 30 percent. He based his figures on two weeks worth of review of the county's data.

Late last month, Sorenson sent local planner Paul Wieczorek, who calculated the

proposed impact fee increases, a four-page list of questions, citing what he considered errors and unclear conclusions.

But Wieczorek said most of the issues could be easily addressed, adding he would answer Sorenson's concerns when commissioners meet today at a 5 p.m. public hearing to discuss raising the impact fee levels.

"I haven't seen anything [in Sorenson's letter] to warrant a long-term delay [by the board]," Wieczorek said.

Delaying the impact fee increases even a month would cost the county a hefty amount.

The county issues at least 300 building permits per month.

This story can be found at: <http://pasco.tbo.com/pasco/MGB5K8CG98E.html>

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