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**News**

**Proposed impact fees are unveiled: New single-family home total would be \$2,013.96**

*By Al Krombach*

PALATKA — The impact fee expert who helped draw up a set of proposed fees for Putnam County was asked Tuesday whether such fees had stifled or discouraged growth and development anywhere she knew of. Her answer was short.

“No,” she said. “Never.”

Melissa Proctor of Government Services Group Inc. of Tallahassee presented county commissioners with a fee schedule during the commission’s regular workshop session. The fee schedule is the result of four months of study by her firm and other contractors, she said, and is based as nearly as possible on what it would cost Putnam County to keep up with growth in four areas — parks and recreation, fire service, transportation and emergency medical service.

The proposed fees total just over \$2,000 for a new single-family residence and range into many thousands of dollars for commercial construction. The suggested transportation impact fee for a convenience store with gas pumps, for instance, tops the scale at \$30,809 per 1,000 square feet of floorspace.

The transportation figures are based on generally accepted traffic studies that factor in the amount of traffic generated by various commercial entities, Proctor said. The fee is aimed at offsetting road improvement and allied costs.

Some commissioners suggested impact fees on businesses might be reduced, waived or refunded to encourage employers to come to Putnam County. That could be written into the ordinance if and when the county decides to adopt fees, Proctor said. The county could also decide to adjust fees to encourage affordable or workforce housing, she said.

Impact fees for parks and recreation would be assessed only on residential construction, Proctor said, because only residents use parks. The suggested fees are \$227.16 for a single-family residence, \$186.96 for multifamily units and \$231.83 for mobile homes.

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“Land for parks is expensive,” Proctor said.

In the fire service category, proposed fees are \$88.32 for residential construction and 14 cents a square foot for nonresidential construction. The fees could change depending on whether the county adopts an MSBU fire fee in place of the .8 mill ad valorem fire assessment now collected.

Proposed transportation impact fees are broken into dozens of categories for various types of buildings and businesses. “Your building department is going to have to make some judgment calls,” Proctor said.

The transportation fee is \$1,628 for a new single-family detached home. For other structures, the fee is based on 1,000-square-foot increments, ranging from \$152 for a miniwarehouse to the aforementioned convenience store.

Suggested EMS fees are \$70.48 for new residential, 15 cents a square foot for commercial, 19 cents a square foot for industrial and 87 cents a square foot for institutional. Institutions, including nursing homes, generate a lot of ambulance runs, Proctor noted.

The four proposed fees for a single-family, detached residence total \$2,013.

Phase 1 of the impact fee process, generating the numbers, is complete, Proctor said. Phase 2 will consist of setting the final fees and drawing up ordinances, holding public hearings, then adopting them.

“We really can’t do much until the school board decides what its fee will be,” Commissioner Kevin Durscher said. “Their fee looks to be much greater than the ones we’ve seen.”

He proposed a joint workshop with the school board. In their own workshop session, the school board’s consultant proposed school impact fees including \$4,347 for a new, single-family residence. The school board has not yet approved a fee. The school board may set the school impact fee, but it must be enacted by the county commission, since only the county commission can adopt ordinances.

Impact fees, collected when building permits are issued, must be set aside in separate accounts and spent only on capital projects associated with the specific growth area, Proctor said. Any money collected must be used within seven years. She suggested re-evaluating the fee schedule every three years.

Commissioners tentatively set a joint session with the school board at their next scheduled workshop on July 18.

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[akrombach@palatkadailynews.com](mailto:akrombach@palatkadailynews.com)

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