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Recalculated impact fees not likely to affect road plans

By FRED HIERS

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BROOKSVILLE - County planners' latest proposal to cut about \$1,000 from their latest impact fee hike would not hurt the county's plans to improve and build new roads. That was what County Engineer Charles Mixson predicted this week as commissioners plan to meet today to discuss raising impact fees.

Originally, county planners said they would ask commissioners to increase the fees from their current \$4,848 to a new \$10,180.

But after meeting with representatives from the Hernando Homebuilders Association, which opposes such a large increase, County Planning Director Larry Jennings recalculated the proposed fees using new data.

The change brought down the proposed impact fee hike about \$1,000, about a third of which would be from road impact fees.

"But we could more than make that up in our growth and the number of impact fees," Mixson said. "In addition, we've always been fairly conservative in our growth estimates." Under the latest impact fee proposal, road impact fees would still be hiked from the current \$1,845 for a single-family detached home to \$3,627.

The county collected more than \$4 million last year from impact fees earmarked for new road construction.

Impact fees are taxes collected by the county from property owners when they build a new home. The one-time fees are used to provide services such as new roads, schools, parks and libraries to accommodate the influx of new homeowners.

The fees can only be spent in the areas they were collected.

Impact fees are divided into separate categories which include road impact fees, fees for new school construction, parks, libraries, law enforcement and fire protection.

Road impact fees are used to widen and upgrade roads.

Some of the latest road improvement projects funded primarily from impact fees include the widening of Spring Hill Drive, Mariner Boulevard and Powell Road.

Impact fees were last increased in 2002. The county collected more than \$15 million in impact fees in 2004.

The county issues about 300 building permits monthly.

If commissioners reduce the proposed impact fee hike by about \$1,000, Mixson said most road projects would not be affected.

The worst case would be one in which some road projects might be postponed one year, but no more, he said.

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