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Roads impact fee may go up

Polk commissioners will consider the matter and the amount at their board meeting Wednesday.

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Sentinel Staff Writer

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Polk County's impact fee for roads could more than double for single-family homes if commissioners approve it at their board meeting Wednesday.

A transportation impact-fee study suggests a variety of calculations, depending on whether the commission wants to include state and county roads, and whether it wants to include a credit from a proposed property-tax increase.

If the commission chooses to include state and county roads into the impact fee and does not include the credit for a proposed property-tax increase, the impact fee for new single-family homes would increase from \$2,705 to \$7,447.

A less pricey option for state and county roads will be if commissioners choose the calculation that includes the proposed property-tax credit. The impact fee for single-family homes with that calculation would be \$5,218.

If commissioners want to include just county roads, the study suggests an impact fee of \$3,510 for single-family homes without the tax credit and \$1,281 with the credit.

Even though it would be a 175 percent increase, Commissioner Randy Wilkinson said he supports the highest impact fee.

"If the other commissioners can resist being prematurely married to raising the property tax long enough to actually consider the high road-impact fee, we will do a great service for all Polk County citizens, not just the special interests," Wilkinson said.

"We should definitely support the full impact fee of \$7,447 for roads because it will bring in almost

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\$400 million more over 10 years and give us flexibility in obtaining new state road matching funds."

If the County Commission does adopt a new impact fee for roads at its board meeting Wednesday, it would be the fourth time this year such fees have been changed.

Earlier this year, the impact fee for emergency medical services was increased to \$97, and a parks-and-recreation impact fee of \$444 was implemented for single-family homes.

The County Commission voted to expand the jail impact fee to include nonresidential construction, which actually decreased the impact fee for single-family homes.

Impact fees are applied to new construction. Supporters of impact fees say it's a way of allowing growth to pay for itself.

More impact-fee increases could be on the way in Polk County. An impact-fee study for schools recently submitted to the county suggested the school impact fee be increased by more than 400 percent, from the current \$1,607 to \$8,767 for single-family homes.

At its current rate, Polk County's school impact fee is far below neighboring counties, where similar fees can reach \$9,700.

Commissioners and School Board members will meet Friday to discuss the school impact-fee study.

School Board member Frank O'Reilly said he hopes the commission will support the new school impact-fee study and adopt the suggested amount -- something he says the commission failed to do in the past.

"It's time for the developers and the builders who have just ravaged this land . . . to pay," O'Reilly said. "It is time for the developers and builders to pay the full amount of that impact fee. We're not going to relent one dime."

The School Board does not decide what, if any, changes would be made to the school impact fee. It's up to the County Commission to make that decision.

A library impact-fee study was recently completed, and those results will be presented to the County Commission on Wednesday.

Studies are also being conducted on fire and law-enforcement impact fees.

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Polk impact fees beginning Oct. 1

Jails:

Single-family home -- \$131

Office -- 19 cents per square foot

Restaurants/bars -- \$1.48 per square foot

Retail -- 50 cents per square foot

Industrial -- 7 cents per square foot

EMS: Single-family home -- \$97

Parks and recreation: Single-family home -- \$444

Fire: Being studied.

Law enforcement: Being studied.

Libraries: Study results will be presented to the County Commission on Wednesday. Study recommends \$130 for a single-family home.

Schools: Single-family home fee currently is \$1,607.

A new study recently released recommends \$8,767. The School Board and County Commission will meet Friday to discuss the study.

Transportation: Single-family home fee is \$2,705. Study suggests a variety of options based on whether the commission wants to include county and state roads, or just county roads. The commission must also decide if it will include proposed property tax credit. Because of these options, the impact fee for single-family homes could range from \$1,281 to \$7,447.

SOURCE: Sentinel research

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