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## Sarasota reviews impact fee structure

Review process could raise fees dramatically

**SOUTH VENICE** -- Impact fees are intended to pay for growth to meet the needs of area roads, parks and libraries.

This is a great idea, but as Sarasota County Commissioner Jon Thaxton likes to say, it doesn't work that way now.

Consultant Clancy Mullen of Duncan Associates presented commissioners Tuesday with an outline of how he is going to try to remedy the inequities while not getting the county into any legal trouble.

Impact fees are often the subject of legal battles between developers and municipalities. This adds to the difficulty in getting fees increased over time.

Sarasota County's impact fees have remained relatively unchanged for more than a decade. Experts say they should be updated every three to five years.

Mullen intends to bring back a formula to assess impact fees for new development in the county by the end of the year for roads, parks and libraries. Other fees, such as those for other public facilities, will take up to a year to formulate.

Thaxton said he wants a formula that provides the county with the maximum legal amount it can charge to pay for any credits and pay for growth.

The reason this is such an issue is that the rapid development in Sarasota County should have translated to an equal growth in area infrastructure, such as roads, parks and libraries.

The county is forced to use money from other sources to develop new infrastructure and that sends a ripple through the county budget.

"We're not even in the ballpark," Staub said of the current impact fees.

Mullen said his goal was to get the most accurate impact fee possible and still be fair.

A new concept in formulating impact fees is to consider the building and upkeep of state roads. In the past, such fees would not be collected because

building and maintenance of these roads was a function of the state.

Thaxton said it is logical to include state road costs, and that would naturally get these fees up significantly.

Mullen is doing a similar impact fee analysis for the City of North Port and he has recommended large increases, even higher than what the county now charges.

North Port's changes would more than quadruple the fees for single-family homes. The impact on commercial properties varies greatly depending on the square footage and uses. The change in the impact fees could generate \$2.8 million annually for North Port road expansion and other capital projects over the next five years.


Those numbers are hard to ignore, especially as the money coming from the state, for roads in particular, is decreasing dramatically as priorities shift.

The board agreed that something needs to happen on impact fees sooner rather than later.

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