

## School Board moving forward with impact fee plan

*By Briar Keathley*

New residents moving to Levy County may be required to pay a school impact fee.

The Levy County School Board approved last Thursday the resolution requesting the Levy County Board of Commissioners to enact a school impact fee ordinance.

If the county adopts the ordinance, the fees will apply to new residential development and the fee amount will vary depending on the type of home. The revenue collected will be used to fund new school facilities needed to accommodate growth in Levy County.

The school board is recommending the following fee schedule:

\$1,200 for single family residential homes including mobile homes not in a mobile home park.

\$750 for mobile homes placed in a mobile home park.

\$850 for multi-family residential homes.

The fee amounts were determined using information from a school impact fee study and are significantly less than the amounts the study proposed as maximum potential fees.

Paige Brookins, District 4 school board member, asked, "If we're presenting a lower amount, in two years, three years, are we going to have to go back and vote again to change it?"

Norris said the county's ordinance would include a clause for the impact fees to be reviewed periodically, just like the county's impact fees.

"(Recommended fees) weighed very heavily on what the County Commission was currently levying and understanding what the total would be for someone trying to build a new home in this district," LCSB Superintendent Cliff Norris said. "Yet at the same time, looking at what the study revealed as far as what is the true cost of the impact of homes and increased growth in this county."

The school impact fees will be in addition to the existing Levy County impact fees, which provide revenue for roads and other public improvements.

Before approving the resolution, the School Board approved an updated school impact fee report. Certain information in the previous report, which Ken Creveling of Urbanomics, Inc. presented the board at the June 20 meeting, was outdated. The cost of construction of a new school facility, as deemed by the Florida Department of Education, has increased. This cost is an important factor in determining the school impact fee amounts.

"I felt like before we made a decision on this, we really needed the most current information," LCSB Director of Finance Bob Clemons said.

At the June 20 board meeting, Creveling explained that school impact fees were determined by several factors, taking into account the type of housing to be built, the cost of new and expanded facilities needed to accommodate and serve new development, and the extent to which those costs may be funded by other sources.

The report found that, based on projected growth of population and household from 2005 to 2030, a new school would need to be built every four to five years in order to accommodate the estimated 3,600 students added to Levy County.

The report also found that the average cost to build those new and expanded facilities, purchase land for the future facilities and provide transportation to those students would be approximately \$18,445 per student or \$8,116 per household.

After subtracting state and local credits, the estimated net cost to accommodate those students would be \$3,133 per household. This amount would also be the maximum potential impact fee imposed on the development of single-family homes. The maximum potential impact fee imposed on the development of multifamily homes would be \$1,598, and the maximum potential impact fee imposed on mobile homes would be \$2,444.

However, due to the increase in the cost of construction, the new report concludes that to provide new schools and transportation, it would now cost approximately \$21,907 per student. Therefore, the maximum potential impact fees imposed on the development of single-family homes would increase to \$3,465, increase to \$1,767 on the development of multi-family homes, and increase to \$2,703 on mobile homes.

Despite these increases, the board did not recommend the maximum potential impact fee amounts, as many school districts have done, Norris said. He pointed out that the recommended fees are extremely below what the true cost would be to make up the difference between what the tax dollars bring in and what it actually costs the district to build new facilities.

He said the district probably could not recoup all the costs at one time, but rather gradually over time as the county decides to increase school impact fees, however, as Clemons said, "It's a step in the right direction."