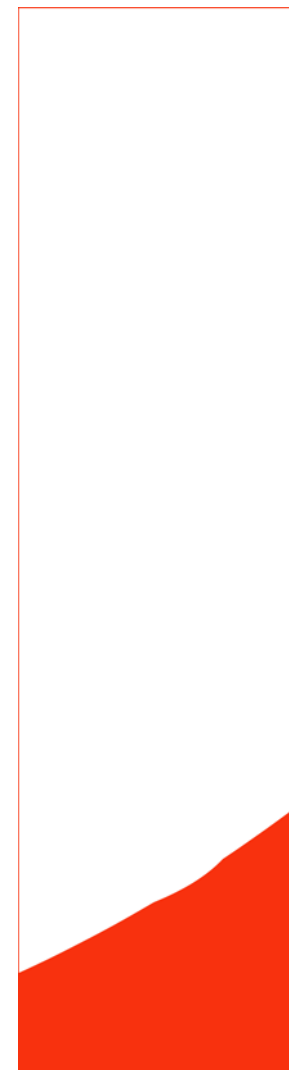




ADVERTISEMENTS



<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/local/seminole/orl-fees2806jun28,0,3552943.story?coll=orl-news-headlines-seminole>

Seminole schools consider impact fee, tax mix

The committee expects to choose a plan at today's 6 p.m. meeting at the school-district office.

Dave Weber
Sentinel Staff Writer

June 28, 2006

SANFORD -- Higher impact fees combined with an additional sales tax or bond issue are being considered by Seminole County school officials to pay for needed classroom construction during the next five years.

Though impact fees charged on new-home construction could quadruple, they would raise only a fraction of the money

required.

Newcomers and current residents would share the bill for school construction under proposals that are being reviewed by an advisory committee of business, government and civic leaders.

"We are looking at both the impact fees and a second source of income -- either the sales tax or a bond issue," said George Kosmac, deputy superintendent of Seminole County schools.

Officials estimate they need at least \$200 million beyond available funds to cover construction costs during the five-year period.

Under the plans being considered, school-impact fees for a newly constructed single-family home could jump from the current \$1,385 to \$5,342. Rates for a town house, multifamily and mobile housing would rise as well.

Two other options suggest slightly lower impact fees: \$4,541 or \$4,808.

But in earlier discussions, some committee members have said the fee should be as high as can be justified, based on calculations of the impact of new homes on the school system.

The higher impact fees would raise about \$41.6 million more than the current tariff.

A 20-year bond issue could kick in \$165 million in its first five years, and a half-cent sales tax for schools would produce \$170 million over five years.

The advisory committee has been working for the past year to find a way to pay for new schools and additions to existing facilities. The committee is expected to settle on a plan during a meeting at 6 p.m. today at the school-district office in Sanford. It will then make a recommendation to the School Board.

The County Commission would have to approve an increase in impact fees, and school-district officials have been paving the way for approval through discussions with commissioners.

Both the bond issue and the half-cent sales tax would require voter approval through a referendum.

The advisory committee hired a Maryland consultant, who has come up with a report on how the dollars would flow from various options.

"The one with the best potential is impact fees," Carson Bise, a consultant with the TischlerBise consulting firm, said in his report.

Impact fees are popular with current residents because they see them as a tax on newcomers who should pay their own way.

Home builders and buyers aren't as pleased with the fees, which jack up the price of new homes.

The bond issue or sales tax might be more difficult to put in place because voter approval is required.

Seminole schools already benefit from a quarter of the county's 1-cent sales tax.

But that tax expires at the end of 2011 and was set up so that the school district got most of its cash in early years.

State law allows the school system to have its own half-cent sales tax, and that is what school officials may seek.

The sales tax is considered by some to be a slightly easier sell than the bond issue, because everyone pays sales tax -- including visitors -- while bond repayment falls only on property owners.

Dave Weber can be reached at 407-320-0915 or dweber@orlandosentinel.com.

Copyright © 2006, [Orlando Sentinel](#) / [Get home delivery - up to 50% off](#)

Get your news *on the go* by going to www.orlandosentinel.com on your mobile browser.