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## Some impact fees could soon double

By FRED HIERS

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BROOKSVILLE - County planners will soon meet with commissioners to recommend massive impact fee hikes that would leave homes and businesses costing thousands of dollars more.

One day after Planning Director Larry Jennings said he would propose hiking educational impact fees as much as twice the current \$2,406 rate, Jennings said Tuesday road impact fees, currently set at \$1,845, would be the next fee he would review and "they could also be in the vicinity of doubling."

Impact fees are taxes paid for by property owners when they build new homes and do not affect those who buy previously constructed homes.

However, Jennings reiterated Tuesday that commissioners have final say to what extent they want to hike impact fees when they review rates at workshops during the coming weeks.

Road impact fees for detached single-family homes are currently \$1,845. Property owners constructing mobile homes currently pay \$927. That \$927 would likely be doubled also, Jennings said.

Most commercial businesses currently pay \$2,752 in road impact fees. If commissioners accept the planning department's recommendation, Jennings said, that figure would also likely double.

About every two years, county planners calculate the maximum the county could legitimately charge for its seven impact fees to include educational facilities, libraries, public buildings, law enforcement, parks, roads and emergency services.

Planners consider construction costs and other related expenses for services when calculating the maximum impact fees the county could charge new homeowners, said County Planner Paul Wieczorek.

In addition to road and educational impact fees, other impact fees range from \$22 to \$280.

Most surrounding counties already charge impact fees significantly higher than what Hernando County currently bills its new homeowners.

Jennings said that as a county grows, demand for services by its residents makes impact fees hikes almost mandatory if officials are to keep up with what citizens want.

Throughout the 1990s, county commissioners did not follow staff suggestions and implement the full, recommended impact fees.

Property owners constructing commercial buildings do not pay school, park or library

impact fees.

"The new impact fees could go into affect by this summer," Jennings said.

The new rates, if approved by commissioners, would not affect builders who submit building applications before the board's vote to hike impact fees.

Whether the increased impact fees would negatively affect growth in the county is not something planners consider when calculating new impact fee recommendations, Jennings said.

"We run the calculations," he said. "(Affect) on growth is not something we address."

Only later do planners meet with commissioners, homeowners and builders to discuss the potential impact.

But Jennings does not think doubling impact fees would slow growth.

"I don't see that having a significant impact assuming all of the other economic features in today's market holds steady," he said.

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