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St. Lucie schools want impact fee hike

County Commission must approve St. Lucie School Board's request for 61-percent increase

By Margot Susca
staff writer

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FORT PIERCE — They can't cash the \$500 million checks just yet.

But the St. Lucie County School Board on Tuesday inched closer to funding two pieces of its long-term building needs.

It unanimously approved requesting a 61 percent hike in education impact fees, an action that requires County Commission approval, and will send to voters on Oct. 18 a request to extend the half-percent sales tax.

Board members and district staff have been pitching the money needed to accommodate growth in four parts: extending the half-percent sales tax that expires next June, increasing impact fees, passing a bond referendum and collection of property taxes.

"This is a critical, critical step that we've taken tonight in meeting one of our four legs on the stool to provide quality education to all children in St. Lucie County," Chairwoman Judi Miller said. "It's more critical than ever before."

New construction will cost \$717 million in the next 20 years.

Current education impact fees are \$3,061— that fee is just part of what is assessed to a typical single-family home, according to county growth management department figures.

All fees will increase slightly Oct. 1, but the education portion represents the largest chunk of the total \$6,811, county officials said.

School fees are expected to generate between \$250 million-\$450 million.

The renewal of the half-percent sales tax would tentatively raise \$250 million, according to school district figures.

- margot.susca@scripps.com

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