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Stuart may add three new impact fees

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STUART — Looking to catch up with growth, city officials are considering adding three new impact fees to charge new construction.

A draft report on an analysis of Stuart impact fees released this week proposes charging \$3,655 for a single-family house and at least \$437,000 for a commercial building with 100,000 square feet.

Conducted by the Maryland-based Tischler-Bise consultants, the study calculates how much the one-time impact fees would have to be to cover the demand for city services generated by new housing subdivisions and shopping plazas.

The report recommends adding fees to fund city road projects, municipal facilities and sanitation, all together totaling \$2,184 for every new house.

Meanwhile other fees, the consultants said, should be lowered.

Fire fees, currently \$263 for a house ranging from 1,101 to 2,300 square feet, would fall to \$207, and police charges from \$425 to \$114.

The city hired the consultants to update fees it hasn't raised in about a decade, Stuart planning consultant Terry O'Neil said.

"It's not unique," he said. "Most communities are looking at their impact fee rates ... it's happening across the board."

In August the county approved increases to its fees — estimated to bring in \$6 million of extra revenue a year — and currently officials from St. Lucie County and Port St. Lucie are in the middle of revising their rates.

"All the government jurisdictions have put it on their regular radar screen every couple of years," said Jeff Dougherty, vice president of the Treasure Coast Builders Association.

Dougherty and representatives from the county's Business Development Board, Chamber of Commerce and Economic Council have been invited to review the city fee proposal at a staff-

level meeting next month.

Doughtery said his group will look to see what data the consultants used to come up with service costs as well as what formula they followed to calculate the fees.

Commissioners are scheduled to conduct a public workshop on the fees later that month, with final approval expected in November, O'Neil said.

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