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County reviews impact fees

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BRADENTON — A consultant presented Manatee County commissioners with proposals on how to be ready when the transportation impact fee reduction plan expires in 2011.

The proposals outlined a plan on how the county assesses impact fees to pay for roads needed for new development, if commissioners decide to change the process.

Because of the economic slump and consequent collapse of the housing market, the commissioners adopted a 50 percent reduction of impact fees for roads in July for a two-year period.

“We need to have a plan to get beyond July 29, 2011,” said County Administrator Ed Hunzeker, in explaining the purpose for Tuesday’s work session on the weighty and controversial subject.

Randy Young, president of the Redmond, Wash.-based management consultant firm Henderson, Young & Co., told commissioners his more than 30-years of experience can help guide them in making any changes they deem necessary.

Before the economic downturn and the two-year reduction of transportation impact fees, Young said, many developers and builders had complained about the assessments established in 2006.

One of the problems, he said, was the formula for calculating the impact fees, which was based on data accumulated during a booming market.

That process was based on the amount of traffic one constructed residential or commercial unit generated on county roads. This is referred to as “consumption-based” impact fees.

Young said many counties are changing to a “planned-based” formula for impact fees, which are calculated according to the cost of a projected list of road improvements in a specific district where the development is located.

The benefits to this method are that developers will know where the road projects are planned, Young said.

To achieve the change in assessment methods, the county would need to revise population growth projections and estimates of where that growth would occur.

Some commissioners were concerned about impact fees hindering the economic recovery.

Commissioner Ron Getman asked if the plan included providing relief to new businesses that bring jobs to county.

Hunzeker said the economic development plan the commissioners approved has provisions for the county to pay the impact fees of new companies that create jobs.

Commissioner Larry Bustle asked if impact fees also could pay for public transit.

Young said some cities, such as Portland, Ore., use impact fees to pay for public transit.

The commission will decide whether to pursue the proposed changes at a future meeting.

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