



Impact Fee Committee Meets Wednesday

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SEBRING — The new Highlands County Citizens Advisory Committee on Impact Fees will hold its first meeting Wednesday afternoon.

County commissioners appointed the 11-member committee to recommend whether the controversial impact fees should be raised, lowered, suspended, discontinued or kept the same.

Impact fees are assessed on all new residential and commercial buildings and are designed to fund the additional infrastructure, from roads and schools to sewers, jails and law enforcement, that will be needed due to growth.

The committee's first meeting is scheduled for 3 p.m. Tuesday at the Highlands County Agri-Civic Center on George Boulevard.

The public is welcome at this committee's meetings, which are "Sunshine meetings." Because the committee was appointed to advise county commissioners, all of its meetings follow the same open-record rules as city council and county commission meetings.

Commissioners appointed a member to represent each of 11 special interests: retail business, banking, homeowners, environmental community, builders, real estate sales, public education, agriculture, municipalities, the lodging industry, and developers.

County Commissioner Don Bates will be the chairman of the committee. Bates will not have a vote and will act only to chair and organize the meetings. Bates also is the non-voting chairman of another committee formed by the county commission, the Lake Denton Citizens Advisory Committee.

Commissioners gave the new committee three main tasks: to make recommendations on changing the impact fee schedule; reviewing the impact fees collected and the expenditures of those fees; and to issue an annual report on impact fees and their effect on the county economy.

Commissioners have to set a new impact fee schedule every year by Dec. 1 for impact fees that will take effect on Jan. 1.

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