



Naples' first impact fee increase in 11 years may be on the way

By JENNA BUZZACCO

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The cost of growth is on the rise.

Naples City Council on Wednesday approved the first reading of an ordinance that would increase impact fees in the coming months. If approved in a second reading and vote, the increase would be the first that Naples residents have seen since 1997.

Impact fees for single-family homes will increase from \$443 now to \$1,369; all other residences will see an increase from \$443 now to \$1,053.

According to a December report concerning impact fees, the city expects to generate more than \$1 million in impact fees over five years. That averages out to about \$202,000 a year, the report states.

Of the proposed \$1,369, about \$777 would go toward parks and waterfront facilities. The rest of the money would be used for police and fire improvements.

The proposed increase is a significant percentage jump from the current impact fees, Councilman Gary Price said.

"I did quick math ... we're talking about a 400 percent increase at those three categories," Price said. "My question is, how do we avoid this kind of thing in the future? It seems like we have taken the hit for a lot of things lately, and we're taking the hit for this one."

This council has the state to thank for the need to raise impact fees. In 2006, the state Legislature passed the Florida Impact Fee Act, which requires that the calculation of impact fees be based on the most recent and localized data.

With impact fees currently based on old data, City Manager Bill Moss said Tuesday city staff felt it was time to re-evaluate the city's fee structure.

The park fee includes plans for the cost of installing or improving sidewalks and bike lanes, but doesn't include the cost of acquiring additional waterfront property or the city dock.

On Wednesday, Councilman John Sorey asked that staff look into whether the Gordon River Greenway Project or the linear parks could be funded through impact fees.

Council members also have asked that staff and consultants look into whether the fees can be used for a parking garage.

Impact fees apply to new construction or when an existing building is remodeled to increase its footprint. The one-time payments are needed to accommodate growth.

Residential growth isn't the only type of growth that will be paying more this year. Commercial properties will also see an increase, from \$735 per 1,000 square feet to \$1,440 per 1,000.

The new fee structure needs second approval before it goes into effect. According to a draft of the ordinance, the new fee structure would go into effect 91 days after final approval.

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