

Published Wednesday, Mar. 14, 2012

[2 Comments](#)

Pasco schools approve new home impact fee

By Ty Beaver, Tri-City Herald

The Pasco School District again could be asking Franklin County commissioners to look at a school impact fee for new home construction.

School board members put their final stamp of approval Tuesday night on an agreement with the city of Pasco to charge up to \$4,700 for new home construction to help pay for future schools. It will go into effect April 16.

District administrators said county leaders have failed to respond to proposals for a similar fee. Superintendent Sandra Hill said she would seek direction from the board on how to approach the issue with the county.

"We have not had a courtesy of a reply from them at all," she said.

Commission Chairman Brad Peck told the Herald before the meeting that the county has been consistent and clear in its opposition to implementing the fee, but he anticipates hearing from the district on the issue.

District officials expect enrollment to grow 34 percent, or more than 5,000 students, in the next six years. The district's facilities are over capacity by 800 students.

The Pasco City Council gave final approval to the impact fee last week. It will charge a \$4,700 fee for a single-family home and \$4,525 per unit in multifamily construction.

Revenue from the fee would provide about \$3.6 million to the district, providing a small portion of the \$80.8 million in needed construction, including two elementary schools, an early learning center and portable classrooms. The remainder of construction costs would come from voter-approved bonds and state matching funds.

Hill said county leaders participated in meetings with school and city officials last spring but they have not spoken with the district since then. The county also has not responded to the district's revised facility plan, which includes the fees, sent in recent weeks.

Peck said the district's construction costs are above the national average for schools, an impact fee would be an unfairly levied tax, and that district officials have not fully considered multi-track operation of schools year-round.

"We view vacant schools as unused capacity," he said.

Hill said the district has considered a multi-track operation of schools but that district residents have told district officials to only consider that option as a last resort.

Also Tuesday:

w School board members unanimously approved a resolution to support the Network for Excellence in Washington Schools.

The organization, also known as NEWS, is one of the chief advocates of the legal case that resulted in the Washington Supreme Court's ruling that the state was violating the state Constitution by not fully funding education.

The district will provide NEWS with \$15,000 as part of its support. District officials said the contribution is included in the budget.

-- Ty Beaver: 582-1402; tbeaver@tricityherald.com