

St. Lucie wants to increase impact fees, but not sure about timetable

By Jeremy Ashton

Originally published 01:23 p.m., March 12, 2008

Updated 01:23 p.m., March 12, 2008

PORT ST. LUCIE — St. Lucie County commissioners indicated today they would like to increase impact fees charged for new construction, but they couldn't agree how quickly raise them.

County Administrator Doug Anderson suggested the commission follow a consultant's recommendation and raise impact fees on single-family homes from \$9,223 to \$12,720. The increase would specifically pay for new roads, parks and public buildings, potentially offsetting some of the budget cuts the county is facing in the next two years.

Commissioner Doug Coward pushed for implementing the increase when the county's new budget takes effect in October. Coward said the move would help shift the burden of paying for new growth from existing residents to the people entering the county.

"If we don't have the new development pay for itself, then we're going to have existing taxpayers subsidize it," he said.

Commissioners Joe Smith and Paula Lewis indicated they would prefer phasing in the impact fee hikes over time.

Smith said all county residents, whether they just arrived or have lived there for years, are "still facing the same financial impacts."

Anderson also proposed a new fee for buying and protecting environmental land, but some commissioners wanted more information on how the fee would be calculated before agreeing to move forward. Under the proposal, the county would charge an additional \$688 for single-family homes.

The commission's strategic planning session continues until 5:15 p.m. and resumes at 8 a.m. Thursday.



© 2008 Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers