



## Viewpoint: School impact fees needed in Santa Rosa County

January 30, 2011

A recent PNJ article indicates that the Santa Rosa County School District is in violation of the Florida class size amendment and could face a penalty of \$318,000. How could this happen in our county when Escambia County's schools are in compliance?

The answer is obvious: poor management by our county's superintendent and School Board. According to Supt. Tim Wyrosdick, "We are out of compliance because we had excess growth." It is my opinion that they are not in compliance because they have not planned for growth properly, and have steadfastly refused to establish a school impact fee for our county.

Florida law allows all of its 67 counties to implement a full range of impact fees, including impact fees for schools, roads, fire, police, libraries, parks and drainage. The average school impact fee for a 2,000-square-foot house in the 31 counties in Florida with these fees is \$5,286.

By law, impact fees must be used to construct the infrastructure required by growth. In our county, almost all of our school campuses have temporary buildings to accommodate growth. One campus (Locklin Technical) has, by my count, seven temporary classrooms. According to Wyrosdick, any development plan for additional classrooms could include more portables!

It is incomprehensible to believe that more temporary classrooms is a long-term solution to classroom overcrowding.

An example of how school impact fees would benefit our county follows.

D.R. Horton, the nation's second-largest homebuilder (\$5.9 billion in assets), is currently finishing the Winners Gait subdivision in Pace. This subdivision is planned for 167 homes, which according to demographic estimates could eventually house approximately 234 school-age children.

If our county had a school impact fee equal to the

average school impact fee in Florida, the income from the fees for this subdivision would be \$882,762. This would be a good down payment on a \$20 million school.

There are currently many subdivisions underway or planned that could generate similar impact fees. The money generated from the impact fees from this subdivision could be used toward building a new school in Pace, which is sorely needed.

As it stands now, D.R. Horton gets a pass on providing for classrooms for the houses it builds, and the county's residents get to pick up the tab via higher taxes and having their children schooled in temporary classrooms.

We need school impact fees in Santa Rosa County!

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