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Clash of the consultants: How much for roads?

Lake sides with report backing large impact-fee hikes over what builders recommend

Christine Dellert

Sentinel Staff Writer

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TAVARES

Despite developers' challenges against proposed road-impact-fee hikes, the county is sticking by a study that backs the large increase.

County officials met Wednesday with representatives from the Home Builders Association of Lake County to hash out conflicting proposals in two separate impact-fee studies.

At issue is the home builders' claim that the county's study -- from the statewide firm Tindale-Oliver & Associates -- overestimates the cost of road construction and suggests inflated impact fees.

In a separate study presented by the home-builders' group last month, developers proposed increasing the fee for most single-family homes from \$2,189 to \$5,722.

That's almost a third of what the county is considering by raising the fee about \$9,200, to \$11,396.


"There's going to be some checking and rechecking on both sides," said Jean Kaminski, executive director of the Home Builders Association.

County Manager Cindy Hall said consultants for both studies spent several hours Wednesday comparing numbers. Although the consultants agreed to trade more information, Hall said the county plans on using its study, despite projected fees that would be among the highest in the state.

Commissioners are set to vote on the road-impact-fee increase on Aug. 21.

Consultants for the home-builder's group argue that the county's Tindale-Oliver study suggests it will cost more than twice as much to build a road in Lake County than it does in Orange County.

But county officials say the study's construction figures aren't inflated.



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"They're sticker-shock numbers, but that's what it's costing," Lake Public Works Director Jim Stivender said.

Construction costs for road projects have more than tripled in the past four years, he said.

Meanwhile, business groups continue to rally against such hefty proposals.

A county advisory board last week said it backed the home-builders' study and wants to look at other ways to keep high impact fees from affecting Lake County industry.

W. Glenn Tyre, a Industrial Development Authority board member and Eustis real-estate agent, said his group wants to "encourage the commissioners to not take radical steps in terms of new impact fees on industries."

County officials also have been presented with a study by another business group, the Council of 100, and a report by a political committee created by construction and building interests bitterly opposed to impact-fee increases. Kaminski said her group doesn't have plans to meet with county officials again before next month's public hearing.

Christine Dellert can be reached at cdellert@orlandosentinel.com or 352-742-5917.

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