

As Martin debates impact fees increase, some question whether county spending too much on needs

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STUART — Several civic leaders questioned Tuesday whether Martin County is spending too much money on new roads, fire-rescue stations, libraries and schools.

They also questioned whether Martin County should use impact fees to help pay for the Indian Street Bridge and improvements to two state roads, Kanner Highway and Warfield Boulevard.

The questions were raised during a meeting of the county's Impact Fee Review Committee, which is analyzing a proposal to raise the charges imposed on new development to pay for the government facilities needed to handle the growth.

A county economic consultant, James Nicholas, has recommended more than doubling the impact fees on a new 2,000-square-foot houses to \$24,653. Impact fees on new stores and offices would also be raised significantly.

But several members of the committee said they believe Martin County should lower its standards for new roads, fire-rescue stations, libraries and schools to keep the costs down. That would also lower the impact fees.

A representative of the Economic Council of Martin County, David Satur, said it seems like the county is building the equivalent of Cadillacs, instead of Chevrolets.

In addition, several committee members questioned why the \$210 million Indian Street Bridge, as well as \$398 million worth of improvements to Warfield Boulevard and \$27 million worth of improvements to Kanner Highway were part of the calculations for road impact fees, which are the largest component of the overall fees.

But the county's economic planner, Cesare Perez, said Nicholas included the major road projects in the impact fee calculations because the state doesn't have money for them.

The County Commission is expected to decide what to do with the consultant's

recommendations in October.



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