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Despite complaints, impact fees will remain in Navarre

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Monday August 27th, 2007

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NAVARRE — The Holley-Navarre Water System has not changed its policy on charging impact fees for new businesses and homes, despite complaints they are stifling growth in southern Santa Rosa County.

The Holley-Navarre Water System's staff and attorney conducted a study on amortizing the impact fees and determined late last week that it would not change its policy to allow everyone to finance their payments.

"We did review our impact fees. What we found is that nobody in our industry has a payment schedule for commercial applications," said Ken Walker, the water system's manager.

While the water system decided not to make any sweeping changes to its impact fee policy, it has allowed individuals to make quarterly payments over the course of one year in the past.

Walker said the water system will listen to proposals from individuals and companies who need assistance with the impact fees and judge each case on an individual basis.

"Anyone who applies (to make the impact fee payments quarterly rather than in one lump sum) will have to have a pretty good story (to be approved)," Walker said.

Walker said the impact fee policy was not changed because he did not feel it was appropriate for the water system to be in the finance business.

A concern is the water system would grant a business an extension to pay the impact fee over time only to have the business go under before the fee is paid off.

The water system does not bond money to pay for any of its improvements. Expansions to wastewater treatment plants and new water and sewer lines are installed before a development is built.

The impact fees are used to recoup the cost of the infrastructure. The fees are determined using a standardized formula based on the amount of water the home or business is estimated to use.

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