

Local

High Springs impact fees up for review

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HIGH SPRINGS – Impact fees in the City of High Springs, which were originally set at \$9,000 per household, will now be reduced by more than one-third if City Manager Ed Booth has his way. Booth presented an impact fee study for review to the City Commission during the March 28, 2013 meeting. In it he specified a total cost for water and wastewater impact fees at just under \$3,000 per average household.

As Booth handed out the study he said he did not intend to discuss it during that meeting. Instead he suggested commissioners review the document for discussion at the Thursday, April 11, 2013 regular commission meeting.

Booth said he had spent nights and weekends crafting the study and wanted to allow commissioners time to adequately digest the information before discussing it formally at a meeting.

“Although the impact fees were set at an earlier time at \$9,000, the City has not collected those fees in the past,” explained Booth in a telephone interview. “This study presents a more affordable and realistic alternative and takes into consideration a joint project with the City of Alachua and considers grant opportunities,” he said.

If the commission approves the study results, they will direct the City Attorney to draw up the necessary paperwork, advertise the item and hold a public hearing before formally approving the impact fee amounts. If fees are approved, “developers will have to pay the impact fee if they want to be guaranteed the use of the sewer system,” Booth explained.

In his study, Booth said, “Impact fees are a form of revenue generated from the addition of new service connections to an existing wastewater system, an upgrade of existing water meter size, or installation of a new water meter.”

He further explained that the fees are not intended to be used for ongoing operations and maintenance. Instead, the fees are to be used to further develop or expand the existing water and wastewater system to accommodate new demand.

Citing the cost for infrastructure expansion within the existing systems caused by new users, which directly influence the existing systems’ remaining capacity, the connection fee should be directly based on the reduction of capacity caused by the new customers.

Wastewater Facilities

Items to consider when determining the impact in services include operational considerations as well as capital costs. Booth determined capital outlay for the City of High Springs, including engineering costs, as well as improvements to the existing wastewater plant to be \$2,370,000. A Rural Development Grant of 45 percent would reduce the cost by \$1,066,500 to a total capital cost to the City of \$1,303,500.

Booth said he calculated that 1,000 new connections would be added in the next seven years. If Booth’s assumptions are correct, the impact fee per unit should be \$1,303 for additional wastewater customers.

Water Facilities

“A determination of expanding the water system must include the treatment plant capacity and expanding,” said Booth in his study. “Based on a 250-gallon per customer usage, the cost for residential customers would be \$1,342 for a 3/4-1-inch meter. Two- and 3-inch meters, usually reserved for businesses using a larger water supply, would add \$1,000 for a 2-inch meter or \$3,000 for a 3-inch meter to the residential amount of \$2,645.

Booth’s study includes detailed breakdowns of how he reached the total amounts.

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