

Board questions fee proposal

Pasco County School Board members have plenty of questions about a county commission proposal to cut or eliminate an impact fee on new construction, a fee that helps pay to build schools.

Among other things, board members want to know how much money the county has collected from impact fees since their inception and how much has been collected from the Penny for Pasco sales tax since it was instituted in 2005.

They want to know the number of housing developments already approved in Pasco and what stage those developments are in.

"That will help us know what we have to prepare for if we have to build schools without impact fees," board member Cynthia Armstrong said during a board meeting Tuesday.

Board members are hoping to get the answers to those and other questions in time for a board workshop March 21 and well in advance of a joint meeting the board will hold with the county commission and municipalities.

A date for that joint meeting has not been set.

The county commission recently began discussing the possibility of slashing the impact fees that builders pay when new homes are built. The fees are added to the price of homes.

The idea behind impact fees is that they help pay for the schools, roads, parks and other public needs created by development.

The school district collects a \$4,876 impact fee on each new single-family home, but the school impact fee is just one of several. The fees for a single family home total \$16,800.

Lynne Webb, president of United School Employees of Pasco, is cool to the idea of any reduction in the amount of impact fee money flowing to the school district.

"From USEP's perspective, we can't imagine losing any source of revenue right now," she told the school board Tuesday. "We are in one of the worst budget crises we've been in in a long time."

Ronnie Blair