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Impact fee may go up for some

School Board to hear proposal, weigh ex-NSB High property

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DELAND -- Owners of new single-family homes may soon see a 44 percent increase in their school impact fee, while the charge could drop for multifamily units and mobile homes.

That's the advisory committee's recommendation that will be presented Tuesday to the Volusia County School Board, which will decide later whether to go along with the proposal. The board meets at 4 p.m. in the School Administrative Complex, 200 N. Clara Ave.

The current impact fee -- designed to make owners of new residential units pay for the schools needed to serve them -- is \$6,066, no matter whether they live in a single-family house, condo, apartment or mobile home.

That fee is scheduled to rise to \$8,547 on April 1 under an existing county ordinance.

But the advisory committee is recommending the impact fee be re-adjusted by housing type instead. It has recommended an \$8,752 fee for single-family homes, \$3,463 for each multifamily unit and \$783 per mobile home.

In other business Tuesday, the School Board is expected to approve an agreement transferring ownership of the former New Smyrna Beach High School property on the North Causeway back to the state for development of a fish hatchery and marine research and education center.

The board had planned to sell the property after opening a new high school in 2006, but a restriction in the deed required the land be given back to the state if not used for educational purposes.

Plans now call for the Wildlife Foundation of Florida, a nonprofit support organization for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, to take over the site.

The foundation is hoping to be able to use up to four buildings constructed in the 1980s, executive director Brett Boston said Friday, but the cost of renovations and eliminating mold that's developed since they were vacated is still being weighed.

It's expected to take about 10 years to fully develop the center that's expected to include a fish hatchery, research and ecosystem restoration projects and education programs to benefit saltwater fishing in the area.

The School Board wouldn't get any money for the old school, but Volusia schoolchildren will be guaranteed free access to the marine center's programs. And the board won't have to pay the estimated \$1 million it would cost to demolish the school buildings.

"We're really pleased with the final arrangement we've been able to make," Superintendent Margaret Smith said. "It's good for the community and good for our students."

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