

Volusia schools, builders near impact-fee deal

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Published: Monday, April 29, 2013 at 4:51 p.m.

Volusia County's builders and the school district are one step away from approving a compromise on how much money residential developers will pay in impact fees starting next year.

A committee represented by both sides unanimously agreed Friday to a \$3,000 fee placed on each new dwelling built starting Jan. 1. A two-year moratorium has been in effect for 13 months that eliminated a \$6,066 fee with the hope of re-energizing the area's construction industry during the recession.

The policy change still must receive the Volusia County School Board's approval, with the issue expected to be presented June 25. "I am appreciative of the efforts of the committee to bring a resolution to this issue," Superintendent Margaret Smith said in a statement. "Committee members served many hours and put aside past differences in order to come to a mutual agreement on a proposal for the School Board."

Jamie Adley, president of the Volusia Building Industry Association, said Monday the moratorium helped spark local home building and sales, attributing at least four by Winston-James Development Inc., the company he co-owns.

"Two were spec homes and two were contracted," he said. Adley added he supported the compromise rate of \$3,000 reached by his organization and the school district but was unsure how new homebuilding will be affected starting next year.

"It won't be as negative as the previous impact fee," he said, which was twice as much. "It has just a huge trickle-down effect to our local economy."

Impact fees are charged to developers — and passed along to their customers — to help pay for roads, parks, schools and other amenities needed to serve residents of new housing.

The negotiations between the two sides grew out of a settlement between Volusia County, the school district and the Volusia Building Industry Association, which had sued in 2008 challenging a 2005 impact fee ordinance's formula for determining the amount charged developers.

The joint committee, with representatives of the School Board and homebuilders, met for eight months seeking a compromise on the fee structure that suited both sides. Otherwise, the former \$6,066 fee possibly would be reinstated next January.

On Jan. 1, 2017, the proposed agreement has the impact fee dropping from \$3,000 to \$2,500 for each new dwelling and a review by another joint committee would look into any further changes beyond 2019.

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