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Park impact-fee debate to continue

By AARON LONDON, Staff Writer 

PALM COAST-- Some lower impact fees are in the works but city officials will continue to address the issue in the new year.

While the City Council unanimously approved a measure to lower non-residential fire impact fees from 54 cents per square foot to 25 cents per square foot, the issue of what to do about park impact fees remains.

City Manager Jim Landon said during Tuesday's council meeting that the discussion of impact fees is necessary because the city ordinance setting those fees has to be reviewed every six years "to make sure we keep them up to date."

City Finance Director Ray Britt briefed the City Council on the proposed changes and said because of variables in the calculations "a lot of this is estimates."

The lack of precision was a concern for Council Member Frank Meeker. He said it was "very difficult for me ask intelligent questions" because of disparities in the numbers.

Landon stepped in and said the idea to reduce the fire impact fee stemmed from a calculation that indicates the fee is high.

"Park impact fees are either low or very close on target," he said.

Mayor Jon Netts said it appears that the city's impact fee collections for parks have been pretty close to what was needed.

"The bottom line is since 2004 we have collected just about enough money to keep pace with what we have done," Netts said. "I don't think you can argue that fact."

Jason DeLorenzo, government affairs director for the Flagler/Palm Coast Home Builders Association, said the city's formula for setting park impact fees is "backward looking" and suggested the city actually has a surplus of park land for the next 10 or 15 years.

"There should be no (park impact) fee at this time," he said.

Council Member Holsey Moorman said he was concerned about the fairness of the park impact fees on current residents if they are lowered or eliminated.

"New residents are going to get a free ride on (current residents') backs," he said.

Meeker agreed that fairness was a concern, but from the perspective of both existing and future residents.

"We've got to be fair for future residents (and) got to be fair for current residents," he said.

In the end, the council decided to approve the reduction in fire impact fees and schedule a workshop to discuss park impact fees in the new year.

The council also approved the second reading of a measure to put a moratorium on new pain management clinics.

"This is not the only enforcement tool that law enforcement will have," Landon said. "It is not intended to affect any of our legitimate medical facilities we have today."

Landon said the measure is designed to keep new pain management clinics from opening in the city "until such time as new rules can be enforced at the state level."

The measure passed unanimously.

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