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Pasco commission closer to consensus on mobility fees

By **Laura Kinsler**

Pasco County commissioners this week inched closer to consensus on a new mobility fee ordinance that is set for a final vote July 12.

But Commissioner Ted Schrader still isn't satisfied with the new fee schedule, which he said penalizes rural property owners.

The mobility fees, which would replace transportation impact fees on new construction, would help pay for new roads, bike trails, sidewalks and public transit. The system — believed to be the first of its kind — would charge higher fees in rural and suburban areas than in urban areas.

Schrader said the fees are too high in the rural zone that makes up most of his east Pasco district.

"I was OK with where we were going until I saw the fees last week," he said.

Assistant County Attorney David Goldstein adjusted the fees for new homes and apartments to make them more equitable.

"For every dollar we raise the urban and suburban fee, we're able to lower the rural by 10," he said.

Under the new schedule, the fee for a typical new house in an urban area would go from \$5,700 to \$5,835. In suburban zones, the mobility fee would go from \$8,515 to \$8,650.

That tweak of \$135 per house is enough to bring the fee in rural areas down to \$9,800 for the average house. For houses larger than 2,500 square feet in a rural area, the fee would drop from \$12,636 to \$10,745 — slightly lower than the current transportation impact fee.

But Schrader complained that the fees for certain types of retail and office uses, such as daycare centers and supermarkets, would have gone up in rural areas under the proposed mobility fees while decreasing in urban areas.

That's the point, Commissioner Jack Mariano said. "We want to keep the rural section rural."

Schrader asked Goldstein to make the same type of adjustments for the commercial fees that he made for the residential fees before the final vote.

He also wants to adjust the mobility fee district boundaries, which currently list the entire Green Swamp area in northeast Pasco as suburban but designate portions of the U.S. 301 corridor as rural.

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