


## School impact fee study gets OK

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After months of political standstill and occasional name calling, Brevard County Commissioners and Brevard School


 Board members agreed on Wednesday to commission a study on school impact fees, a move that officials on both sides say is a positive step forward.

In addition, commissioners will consider approving a request to release fees the county has already collected at their meeting in early October.

“At this point in time, the last thing we want to do is hurt another kid,” said Commissioner Robin Fisher when asked if he would vote


 to approve the distribution of funds. “We’re going to look it very carefully.”

The district is counting on the \$8.3 million in fees to make debt

 payments for this school year and next year. If the district does not receive the dollars, district leaders created a list of maintenance projects that would be cut from the budget in order to free up money to pay the debt.

And that has parents like Victoria Stewart of Indialantic concerned.

“A lot of these cuts are related to safety issues, fire code deficiencies,” the former safety engineer

 said. “We need those impact fees.”

During the meeting, Commissioner Trudie Infantini made a motion to approve releasing the impact fees.

But other commissioners said that Wednesday’s meeting was not the place to vote on their release, since it was not a regular meeting and officials had not had a chance to review the recommendation.

Wednesday’s meeting was also seen as a way to better the working relationship between the elected boards, which suffered after three schools

 were closed this summer.

Some county commissioners disagreed so passionately with the school board’s decision to shutter the schools that they unsuccessfully took the district to court over the matter.

Since then, some school board members have accused county commissioners of playing politics by refusing to release more than \$8.3 million in fees, an allegation that the commissioners have denied.

Some commissioners have contended that their concerns have instead stemmed from whether the fees should be collected, since the county sacrificed the transportation impact fee money

 to help boost the local construction industry.

Officials see the study and an ongoing audit, which is looking at how the fees have been spent, as a fresh start. It will help determine what, if any, changes are made to the impact fees and the county's ordinance.

County officials also used the meeting to discuss some of their concerns over the school closures. At one point, Fisher asked whether there were any more closures on the horizon.

Brevard Superintendent Brian Binggeli responded, saying: "There are no identified school closures on the horizon at this point. All I can say is that we'll continue to monitor the enrollment."

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