

## The Daily Commercial

# School Board needs more time to make a decision on impact fees

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TAVARES -- Facts, figures, pie charts and projections weren't enough for the Lake County School Board to make an informed decision about deferring impact fees.

At a special meeting Monday, Chief of Business Services Carol MacLeod and Director of Growth Planning Harry Fix presented the board with an update of the current and short term implications of delaying the collection of money generated from new construction.

The board is considering the impact fee deferral to help in the county's effort to spur economic growth. But first it wanted a clear picture on how such a move would affect funding for future capacity needs. Unfortunately, uncertainties remained because of the financial complexities and unavailable information.

"We're all finding this is a puzzle and pieces are missing," Board Chairman Cindy Barrow said.

"It's not a simple question and answer," MacLeod said.

One of the complicating factors is that no one really knows how much impact money to accurately plan for beyond the next three years. According to MacLeod, the district has more than \$311 million in unfunded capital projects on the books.

"I want to know how much can be covered by impact fees," Board Member Rosanne Brandeburg said.

Since only expansion and new construction, not renovation, can be paid for with impact fees, the board needed a better breakdown of its capital expenditure responsibilities. Another unanswered question involved the clarification of how many new units would result from seven, multi-family building permits pulled in Lake County in 2009. With those gaps, along with a pending impact fee study slated for May, the board decided it would wait until mid-June before meeting with county commissioners to discuss its recommendation.

In the meantime, Board Member Larry Metz suggested a compromise that would postpone the collection of school impact fees until a Certificate of Occupation is issued instead of at the time of permitting. The interim proposal seemed to signal the Board's willingness to keep the lines of communication open while formulating its final decision.

"The superintendent's motto is get it right the first time, I think that's what we ought to do," Board Member Kyleen Fischer said. "I want this to be as transparent as possible because there is so much distrust out there now."

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