

Chambers reviewing impact fee proposals in Indian River County

By Lamaur Stancil

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INDIAN RIVER COUNTY — If the county's proposed impact fee increases go into effect next year, new home buyers could face substantially higher impact fees.

But a group of local business and community leaders hope to be able to offer county officials a better solution next month.

The heads of the Indian River and Sebastian area chambers of commerce are leading an impact fee task force, made up of about two dozen people in business and government, who are reviewing the May recommendations of a Kissimmee-based consultant to increase all eight fees by 72 percent overall.

The task force's goal is to find its agreements and disagreements with the consultant findings by Nov. 27, Indian River County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Penny Chandler said Tuesday in a brief presentation to the commission.

"We have a diversified group of people who may not always agree," said committee member and Pointe West developer Chuck Mechling. "But in the end, we should have a result that is community-focused."

Impact fees are one-time charges assessed against builders by local government and passed onto the buyers. The fees are meant to help pay for the expansion of specific services, such as roads or schools, which new residents or new business customers will demand.

Duncan and Associates presented its recommendations to the county in May. For a single-family home of 2,000 square feet, consultants said the county should increase the current fees of \$9,803 to almost \$17,000 — a difference of more than \$7,000. While Mechling and other builders said this would be too costly, some county officials said that's the cost of having roads, parks and schools built for the increased population.

The county has had a traffic impact fee for several years, but adopted in 2004 fees for parks, schools, libraries, landfill space, jail space, fire-rescue equipment, law enforcement facilities and other public buildings. The traffic impact fee was last increased in 1999 and 2004, budget manager Jason Brown said. The county's goal is to review all the fees every few years, he said.

Here are the current and proposed impact fees for a new single-family home of 2,000 square feet in unincorporated Indian River County and what the money

would be used for:

- ▯ Roads: \$5,202; \$8,073, 55 percent increase
- ▯ Schools: \$1,756; \$4,459, 154 percent increase
- ▯ Recreation: \$1,463; \$2,488, 70 percent increase
- ▯ Libraries: \$483; \$552, 17 percent increase
- ▯ Public buildings: \$206; \$408, 97 percent increase
- ▯ Law enforcement: \$245; \$348, 42 percent increase
- ▯ Fire rescue: \$278; \$326, 17 percent increase
- ▯ Jails: \$170; \$215, 26 percent increase
- ▯ Solid waste: \$75; \$82, 9 percent increase
- ▯ Total: \$9,878; \$16,951, 72 percent increase



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