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## Environmentally friendly

# Commissioners Review 'Green' Initiatives

By [Tom Palmer](#)

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BARTOW | County commissioners got a glimpse Friday of some of the issues that are emerging as Polk County tries to expand green initiatives.

The initiatives include a proposed green building ordinance, redrawing of urban growth boundaries to preserve more green space, changes in design for new development to encourage transit and other "healthy community" measures.

County Manager Mike Herr said the purpose of the two-hour briefing was to bring commissioners up to date on what county officials are already doing and to give them some information on what was going to be coming to them for consideration in coming months.

The green building ordinance proposes incentives for green development, including substantial refunds in impact fees.

Commissioner Jean Reed questioned the justification for impact fee refunds in areas other than water and sewer, which would be justified by greater water conservation.

"Why are we talking about all of the impact fees?" she asked.

## BUILDERS INVOLVED

Scott Coulombe, executive director for the Polk County Builders Association, said they submitted the proposal to begin a dialogue on what kinds of incentives would be appropriate.

PCBA has long opposed impact fees.

Growth Management Director Tom Deardorff said the incentives could depend on what kind of development is involved.

"If all you're just constructing a green building, that may not lend itself to a transportation impact fee refund," he said.

But he added that if the project were a green development with a grid road network and a layout that encouraged people to walk or bicycle instead of drive, that might be worth considering for transportation impact fee reductions.

"Those are the kinds of things we give density bonus points for," Reed said.

Deardorff said the various incentives may be part of a larger package that will be presented to commissioners.

## **NOW UNDER WAY**

Meanwhile, Deardorff listed a number of green initiatives Polk County has already taken, including:

Purchasing more than 25,000 acres for preservation under the Polk County Environmental Lands Program.

Adopting new lighting technology for county parks that will cut electricity use by 44 percent.

Initiation of an energy conservation program that has saved 49 million kilowatt hours of electricity, 700,000 therms of natural gas, \$4.9 million and reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 39 metric tons.

Using solar power for 43 school zone beacons and 14 warning beacons, saving \$20,000 a year.

A curbside recycling program that has removed 34 tons of recyclables and generated \$280,000 in revenue.

Commission Chairman Sam Johnson said he'd like to see the county launch a single Web site that would allow residents to go to one site to find information on a variety of conservation techniques.

"That way they don't have to search through every department in the county," he said.

[Tom Palmer can be reached at [tom.palmer@theledger.com](mailto:tom.palmer@theledger.com) or 863-802-7535. Read more views on county government at <http://county.theledger.com>.]

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