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Lee Co. correcting impact fee mismanagement

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LEHIGH ACRES - Lee County commissioners made a mistake when transferring funds from the Lehigh Acres park impact fee district to pay for the soccer fields at JetBlue Park and improvements at a Fort Myers park. Now they hope to self-correct their mistake using taxpayer dollars.

Veterans Park in Lehigh Acres is getting some major upgrades. It's one of two completed parks in the town, with two other parks in the works.

But the community planning president says for the largest town land-wise in unincorporated Lee County, there should be even more parks.

Lee County commissioners transferred nearly \$2-million in the Lehigh community park impact fee district to pay for improvements to Schandler Hall Community Park off of Palm Beach Boulevard in Fort Myers and to construct the soccer fields at JetBlue Park.

What commissioners didn't realize, was unlike road projects, the money to fund park projects in a particular district has to stay in that district.

The mistake was discovered recently when the county was going over impact fees and record requests.

So the proposed solution to fix it is to take the \$1.8-million used, plus a 1.5-percent interest rate from unincorporated Lee County taxpayer reserves.

It's a plan that Edd Weiner, President of the Lehigh Acres Community Planning Panel, says he isn't happy about.

"We're getting double taxed for what we had nothing to do with so I mean I hope that somebody would use enough imagination and find that interest money from some other source," he said.

The Lee County assistant manager, a county commissioner and a county attorney all declined to do an interview Tuesday.

The vote to transfer the money back into Lehigh Acres impact fee district will go before county commissioners next Tuesday.



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