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## County OK's impact fees

By Pete Gawda, Okeechobee News

In 90 days, the cost of new homes in the county will be going up thanks to action taken at the Thursday, April 12, meeting of the Okeechobee County Board of County Commissioners.

The board received the long delayed final report on impact fees from consultant Walter Keller and, with little discussion, lost no time in implementing them.

Commissioners also spent some time discussing the airport and industrial park. Sheriff Paul May was given space at the industrial park and a survey was authorized for the airport.

Commissioners adopted a resolution implementing impact fees for roads, corrections, law enforcement, fire and EMS. The purpose of an impact fee is to require a builder to pay for the additional infrastructure his development would require. Impact fees will be imposed at the time a building permit is pulled.

Total impact fees for a single family dwelling unit built in an unincorporated area of the county would be about \$1,800. For an office, impact fees would total \$800. For multi-family apartment buildings, the total impact fee per unit would be \$1,181.

Impact fees for a mobile home in a mobile home or RV park would total \$887 per unit, per space.

Other impact fee schedules were adopted for office, industrial and commercial uses.

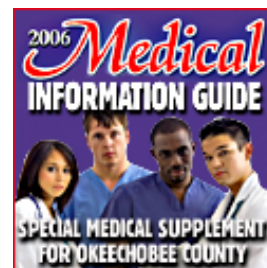
It should be noted these are county impact fees only. To these totals, everyone will have to add a school impact fee.

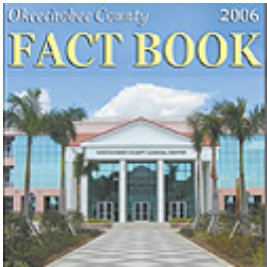
For those inside the city limits, they will have to pay school, fire/rescue and city impact fees.

Before the ordinance was adopted, commissioners held a public hearing to allow citizens to voice their opinions and ask questions. No one spoke at the public hearing.

The ordinance calls for the fees to be reconsidered in three years. However, they can be reconsidered sooner if there is reason.

Commissioner Clif Betts noted the distinction Mr. Keller had made for





mobile homes. A mobile home on a single lot is charged the same impact fee as a site-built home. The mobile home rate is charged for a mobile home in a mobile home or RV park.

He said the school board did not make that distinction in their impact fee schedule and that it would be better if both entities were consistent in their rate schedule.

Road impact fees will be used for a west side bypass road, improvements on S.W. 32nd Street and S.W. 28th Street and a countywide maintenance facility. According to Mr. Keller's figures, impact fees will generate about 25 percent of the cost of these projects. The remainder must come from additional sources.

Fire and fire/rescue impact fees will be used for building a new EMS station, for equipment and for a countywide radio system. Corrections impact fees would be used for jail expansion and a countywide radio system.

In a related matter, commissioners approved an interlocal agreement with the City of Okeechobee for collecting impact fees. The county will collect school impact fees and forward them to the school board, while the city will collect county impact fees and pass them along to the county.

In an unrelated matter, Sheriff May received space in the airport industrial park incubator building for the Citizens on Patrol (COPs) program - a program that utilizes volunteers to patrol residential areas and report suspicious activity.

He told commissioners the COP program needed covered storage space. The sheriff said his present office building is full and closet and hall spaces were used for offices.

Currently, the COP program operates out of a building owned by the property appraiser.

The incubator building has three sections that are designed to be rented out to provide office and operating spaces for start up industries.

Deputy County Administrator Robbie Chartier noted that the Florida Department of Agriculture and Commerce was interested in renting space at the health department. She said rent from that space would more than offset the loss of rent from the incubator building.

It was also noted that the presence of the sheriff's office in the industrial park would improve security.

In another matter regarding the airport, commissioners authorized a survey of the airport property in order to provide a legal description required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Craig A. Smith was awarded the contract at a cost of \$16,540.

Airport manager Vernon Gray noted that a thorough search could not

uncover a complete survey.

After discussion with Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) representatives, commissioners declined to take action on a leaking injection well at the sports complex until more information could be obtained.

In other action, the board:

- \* granted final plat approval for the proposed 27-lot Ridgway Acres subdivision to be located northeast of the intersection of S.W. 67th Drive and S.W. 21st Parkway;

- \* granted final plat approval for the proposed 39-lot Palm Creek Estates Unit 4 subdivision adjacent to Palm Creek Estates Unit 3, but did not accept the streets for maintenance because it is a gated community;

- \* transferred \$3,701 from the Transportation Trust Fund Reserve for Contingencies to Transportation Disadvantaged operating line item to cover the county's portion of a grant to provide transportation for the disadvantaged;

- \* awarded a bid for six precast concrete tables at a cost of \$9,208;

- \* purchased a Ford 2007 F-750 flatbed dump/labor truck at a cost of \$85,639;

- \* purchased an aerial boom lift for the facilities maintenance department at a cost of \$123,395;

- \* awarded a contract for engineering services to provide preliminary project costs for infrastructure improvements in Okeechobee Gardens subdivision at a cost of \$31,000; and,

- \* appointed Lowery Markham to serve out the remainder of Noel Chandler's term on the Tourist Development Council.

Post your opinions in the Public Issues Forum at [www.newszap.com](http://www.newszap.com). Reporter Pete Gawda may be reached at [pgawda@newszap.com](mailto:pgawda@newszap.com).

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