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## County Approves Impact Fee Hike

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The Ledger

BARTOW - Construction prices are going up and so are impact fees, the County Commission voted 4-1 on Wednesday.

Commissioners approved a resolution that, for the first time, imposes an across-the-board 3.3 percent indexing increase to make sure the fees will pay for the projects they're supposed to fund.

The vote affects impact fees for roads, the jail, ambulance service, libraries, parks, fire and police. The school impact fee, which is based on the amount of state funding coming to local schools, will have to be calculated separately and will be considered at the July 11 commission meeting.

The changes will increase impact fee revenue by more than \$1 million.

Wednesday's vote didn't come quickly.

Commissioner Jack Myers, a consistent impact fee critic, tried unsuccessfully to scuttle the increase, citing recent news of the slump in building permits and the perennial argument that the fees stifle home ownership.

But commission chairman Bob English said that argument was short-sighted.

"What's the point of having a plan if you don't fund it?" he asked, referring to the county's long-term capital plan to expand roads, parks and other public infrastructure to keep up with growth.

Myers argued that lowering the impact fees would stimulate more construction.

English said the current building slump had nothing to do with impact fees.

"Construction's down nationwide," he said, arguing the trend is market-related.

English said construction costs and land prices probably have more of an effect on the price of a new home than impact fees.

Commissioner Randy Wilkinson said he didn't want Polk County to have impact fees so low it would become a magnet for people who want to live here and work elsewhere.

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