

## Top 10: Putnam County begins to collect impact fees

*By Henry Frederick*

After nearly a month's delay to debate fine points and exceptions, Putnam County began assessing impact fees on new construction in March.

The implementation of the fees was voted the No. 6 story of 2007 by the staff of the Palatka Daily News.

The fees, developed over many months of workshops and studies, are aimed at offsetting part of the cost that population growth generates through its impact on roads, public services and facilities. The fees are to be paid when building permits are applied for.

In Putnam, the fees total about \$7,000 on a new residence. The school impact portion of that amounts to more than \$4,000. Other fees are aimed at improving roads, recreation and emergency services.

Some residents and builders protested the fees, saying they stifle development and make housing too expensive.

But County Administrator Rick Leary said at the time, "So many counties have them now, it's becoming the norm. Most businesses incorporate them into the cost of building. They wouldn't move to another county because of a few hundred dollars' difference.

The fees are all around us. If we were the only county with impact fees, then it would hurt."

In incorporated municipalities, only the county school impact fee is levied, though towns and cities may impose their own impact fees.

The Welaka Town Council protested the school portion of the impact fee, passing a resolution to deny its collection just days before the fee schedule went into effect. Council members said the town's population consists mostly of senior citizens who have no impact on schools.

School board members, saying the fees are aimed at new housing, not existing residents, then authorized the board's attorney to file suit to force Welaka's compliance. School Superintendent David Buckles said if Welaka opted out, the costs would be unfairly passed on to the county's remaining taxpayers.

After lawyers for the two boards met, Welaka's town council agreed to rescind its resolution and allow the school impact fee to be collected pending a final meeting between the two boards. That meeting is set to take place in January.

[hfrederick@palatkadailynews.com](mailto:hfrederick@palatkadailynews.com)

About This Series

The Daily News is taking a look at the major local news stories from 2007, as selected by a survey of the newspaper's staff. Articles detailing the Top 10 stories of the year will be featured in a daily countdown.

10. Volunteer resigns after flap over bumper sticker backing Sheriff Dean Kelly's opponent.
9. Crescent City Jr.-Sr. High School Raiders go 10-0 in football.
8. Woody Boynton, Palatka's public works director, is chosen to be its next city manager.
7. State stifles plan for 3rd Seminole Electric coal-fired generator.