

FLAGLER

Flagler County Commission to discuss impact fees for educational facilities on Tuesday

Nikki Ross The Daytona Beach News-Journal

Published 5:30 a.m. ET Sept. 13, 2021 | Updated 11:42 a.m. ET Sept. 13, 2021

Note: An earlier version of this story stated the meeting was scheduled to take place Monday.

The Flagler County Commission Tuesday will consider adopting impact fees for the county's unincorporated areas following a workshop requested by the school district, county press release stated.

The Flagler County School District is requesting a more than 50% increase to its impact fees, which have not changed since 2004, according to the district.

Education: Flagler parents want to stick with current schools, despite rezoning plans

Test scores: Volusia-Flagler 3rd grade reading scores down, in line with state: See your school's score

Impact fees are one-time charges on new construction used to pay for additional public services to accommodate population growth.

If approved by the county, impact fees for construction of a single-family home would increase from \$3,600 to \$7,175; multi-family homes would go from \$931 to \$1,774; and mobile homes will go from \$1,066 to \$5,279, according to Jason Wheeler, spokesman for the school district.

“The important thing for residents to understand is that impact fees are for new development and new home construction,” Flagler County Administrator Heidi Petito said in the press release. “If you are doing something like putting a new deck on your home, there won’t be an impact fee. They are really to cover new development.”

The district wants to update its impact fees because elementary and high schools have exceeded capacity. Middle schools will exceed capacity next year when elementary schools change to K-5.

In 2004, 8,271 students were enrolled in the district, which had four schools and eight funding sources. In 2020, 11,953 students were enrolled in the district's nine schools, and only three funding sources were available.

The cost of student stations for each level of schooling — elementary, middle and high school — increased by roughly \$10,000 since 2004.

The district plans to use the funds for anticipated additions and/or new schools over the next five years, according to the district. The current impact fee does not cover the cost of the new growth, which is anticipated to increase 40% over the next 10 years.

The commission will formally consider adopting the school board's proposed impact fee amendments at its meeting at 10 a.m. Sept. 20.

Other impact fees for the county

In order to impose an impact fee, there must be a demonstrated need for the fee, according to the county. The proposed rates are based on anticipated impacts from any new growth which is determined through an impact fee study.

Flagler County contracted consultant Tindale Oliver to conduct the study, which is required by state law, according to the release. The study focused on the impact of the growth in the county's unincorporated area regarding transportation; parks and recreational facilities; law enforcement; public buildings; library facilities; fire rescue; and emergency medical services.

"It's a complicated fee schedule that is still being ironed out," said county spokeswoman Julie Murphy in an email.

Flagler County staff is recommending the board consider adopting fees at a lower rate than what Oliver currently has established for the parks and recreational facilities and for transportation facilities, which was discontinued in 2012, according to the release. The county did not respond to requests for the exact proposed fees.

Any increases to these to fees will be phased in incrementally, according to the county.

“We are leaning toward full implementation of the impact fee study for library facilities, law enforcement, and fire rescue and EMS,” said Growth Management Director Adam Mengel in the release. “We will probably eliminate the public buildings impact fee that was recommended in the study. Ultimately, this is all the decision of the Board of County Commissioners.”

Impact fees must be used to offset the cost of new growth, and specifically must be spent on the facility or service for the fee type, according to the county. For example, money collected from fire rescue and emergency medical services impact fees must be used to cover capital projects related to those services, and cannot be used to replace operational funds.

“While the fees are to be paid to accommodate new growth, in some respects all residents benefit from the expansion of public facilities,” Petito said in the release. “Impact fees are a way to help pay for additional government services that development will require rather than putting growth-related costs on the backs of current taxpayers.”