

Letter: Impact fee formula used by school officials based on 'invalid assumption'

By TCPalm Staff

Friday, February 8, 2008

Now we're talkin'.

Kirk Sorenson's guest column, "Impact fee calculations should be correct" (Feb. 4) injected some common sense into the discussion of impact fees. Check facts and use current, valid assumptions in the methodology used to justify taxes. And while we're at it, let's assess the need for expenditures the same way. I like that.

If we take this approach, we must question using the number of housing units as a basis from which to extrapolate the need for student capacity in Martin County schools. This is a valid approach where student populations increase as the number of housing units increases. But that is certainly not the case here, where the number of housing units continues to increase while our student population declines.

Dr. James Nicholas clearly points this out in the study he performed for our School Board, yet he uses this invalid assumption to project the need anyway. It was easy for the School Board to gloss over the assumption, perhaps because it helped justify a perceived need for higher capital expenditures.

Yet another approach to reducing the need for additional classrooms, and therefore, school impact fees, is to expand course availability in the Florida Virtual School, an exceptional program which continues to prove its effectiveness.

There are many additional ways to continue to provide a superior educational experience for our children that are not dependent on massive capital expenditures. Let's encourage our School Board members to take advantage of them.

Dave Kuiper

Palm City