

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA
M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Board of County Commissioners

THROUGH: John A. Titkanich, Jr.; County Administrator

FROM: Andrew Sobczak, Planning & Development Services Director

DATE: October 19, 2023

SUBJECT: Stormwater Inspection Fees for Solar Facilities

It is requested that the data herein presented be given formal consideration by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) at its regular meeting of October 31, 2023.

BACKGROUND

In 2018, The Board of County Commissioners approved by resolution a schedule of inspection fees for multi-family and commercial development projects. The inspection fees are for site inspections completed by Public Works Department staff. Within the approved schedule, there is a \$1,000 per-acre fee for commercial site plans that is applied to large commercial projects, including solar facilities. While solar facilities in the county were brand new at the time the fee schedule was approved, since that time, a total of six solar facilities have now been approved with additional facilities proposed.

Earlier this year, Florida Power and Light (FPL) staff reached out to county staff asking for a second look at the \$1,000 per acre inspection fee that was being applied to its solar facilities in the county. While solar facilities are generally large sites (100's of acres), the extent of formal site improvements within them, aside from the solar panels, is generally very limited. For this reason, county staff looked at several options for developing a more appropriate inspection fee category specific to solar facilities.

ANALYSIS

Most commercial and multi-family developments consist of 60% to 75% impervious area, with complex drainage systems and stormwater improvements. The \$1,000 per acre commercial site plan inspection fee is appropriate for these types of projects because they often involve multiple inspections and detailed onsite review by Public Works staff. By comparison, solar facilities generally consist of 3% to 5% impervious area, and have significantly less complex drainage and stormwater systems. For that reason, they are much less demanding with regards to the time and resources needed for county staff to inspect them.

To address this issue, county staff developed a special inspection category for solar facilities that includes a \$1,000 per acre of *impervious area* fee. Based on discussions with FPL staff, and research on how other local jurisdictions assess inspection fees for solar facilities, the \$1,000 per acre of impervious area fee is appropriate and proportional to the level of staff time involved in inspecting solar facility projects.

Implementing the new category would reduce the inspection fee cost for the typical 400-acre solar facility site from \$400,000, to between \$12,000 and \$20,000. It is anticipated that this fee will adequately cover county costs, while not overcharging the applicant.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board of County Commissioners adopt the proposed inspection fee for solar facilities and the associated fee resolution.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Fee Resolution