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Cape leaders vote down impact fee hike

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CAPE CORAL: The state's special session on property taxes put Cape Coral leaders on edge. A fee used to pay for growth was voted down for the first time in five years.

Cape leaders say it's all about timing. But Monday night, they said it's a bad time to increase road impact fees for inflation after previously talking about pushing it over the \$4,000 mark.

But for the first time in five years, the council voted down another jump which cut off any chance for a road impact fee hike this year and it was good news for builders.

"The residential contractors are struggling as it is," said one builder. "It's very hard for anybody to be selling houses right now."

The builders say the fees only hurt the market because they force the scrapping of projects and worker layoffs.

But several homeowners said they weren't buying it.

"Growth has to pay for growth. The existing citizens cannot have that burden put on them," said one Cape homeowner.

The leader behind the idea to up the road fees argued that there is just no way around it.

"New lane miles are paid with impact fees - clear and simple," said Cape Councilman Alex LaPera.

The fees would cover the paving, widening, and striping Cape Coral's streets to accommodate more drivers. But Monday, council members said the state's property tax could cause a bump down the road.

"I know that will cut some money out of our local budget, but I think with millions in increases in our budget over the last two-and-a-half years, we have room to cut," said Chris Berardi of the Cape City Council.

They would not cut police and fire services, but "unnecessary spending" which in this case would include the \$4,000 road impact fee.

Currently, the road impact fee stands at \$3,300 per single-family home. That doesn't even come close to the \$9,000 fee that Lee and Collier County homeowners have to pay for roads.

Cape leaders plan to revamp the impact fee schedule starting next year.

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