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## **Fun Time day care on track, thanks to impact fee deferral**

By Jenna Buzzacco

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While Fun Time Early Childhood Academy officials do not have a date set for the opening of their new building, they're well on their way.

And a decision by Collier County commissioners last week will make constructing a new \$2.2 million modular building a little easier.

Collier County commissioners last Tuesday approved the day care's request to be part of Collier County's charitable organization impact fee deferral program. Commissioners voted 4-0 in favor of the more than \$79,000 request.

The decision means the building will be built using state, local and federal funds, said Peter Manion, co-chairman of the Fun Time board of directors. The impact fee deferral also acts as matching funds for the grant the day care received from the Naples Children and Education Foundation.

"It's really a double payment," Manion said. "We reduce costs, and we get the matching funds."

Established in 2001, the impact fee deferral program authorizes waivers to tax-exempt, not-for-profit, charitable entities that provide services to low income residents in Collier County.

Fun Time originally applied for the deferral in 2006.

"This process has been going on for a long time," Manion said. "There's always some budget concerns, but I guess they decided we provided a valuable service."

Fun Time has been providing child care for low income families in Collier County for 45 years. The day care, which is located in Naples' River Park neighborhood, provides child care for families at a reduced cost.

At least 20 percent of the 50 children who attend Fun Time are part of Head Start. In addition to the children eligible for Head Start, at least half of the families qualify for state subsidies for tuition.

For those families who don't receive state or federal subsidies for tuition, Fun Time charges families what they can afford.

Manion said the impact fee deferral will be in place until the day care is no longer considered a charitable entity.

"What this does is defer it until, essentially, we go out of business," he said.

That won't be anytime soon, Manion said, especially now that the city has approved plans for a new

building.

The city's Design Review Board approved final plans for the new \$2.2 million modular building in July. The decision came nearly two years after the current building at 1010 Fifth Avenue North was considered a total loss.

In October 2005, Hurricane Wilma ripped off Fun Time's roof. Repairs were made, but as the cost of maintain the existing property rose, day care officials began to look at making a fresh start.

While initial plans to begin work on a 17,000-square-foot, two-story building at 102 12th St. N. fell through, Fun Time board members approached Naples City Council earlier this year with a new, scaled back version of the center.

The new center will be an 8,064-square-foot building at 102 12th St. N. The building is nearly double the current building, and will allow more families to use its services.

But don't expect construction to begin on the new building anytime soon. Manion said the organization is still working with designers to design the interior of the building. The project still needs to go out for a competitive bid, and contractors will need to apply for a building permit.

"Once that is done, they'll start building the building," he said. "It's a very long process. But at this process we can say (we'll open) early in the first quarter of '08."

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