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\$1,206 impact fee added in Cape

By Don Ruane

druane@news-press.com

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Cape Coral added \$1,206 to the cost of a new home Monday, raising the bar for people looking for affordable place to live in the city.

The public safety fees will help pay for police, but how will they afford to live in the city, Becky Swift of First Home Builders asked during the public hearing.

"We need to look at this and see what is needed and what can wait until a later time," Swift said.

The new fees become effective on Sept. 1, the same day the city staff hopes to start collecting a higher road impact fee.

The public safety fees adopted by a 7-1 vote include new police and emergency medical service impact fees and a higher fire and rescue fee. Councilman Jim Jeffers voted no. His concern was the ordinance calls for the funds to be kept in separate accounts instead of one, which he said would provide more flexibility in their use.

Coupled with other impact fees charged by the city, the owner of a new home can expect to pay \$13,637.66 as his share of the cost for the utility, roads, parks, police, fire and medical services the people who will live in that home will need. Impact fees are used to pay for services demanded by growth.

"This is a considerable amount of money for a family purchasing its first home," said Patty Schnell, executive director of the Cape Coral Construction Industry Association.

People who build new homes will pay these fees and higher taxes than someone living in an existing home of the same size, said Scott Hertz, acting president of the construction association.

"They're kind of getting double-dipped," Hertz said.

"It's getting harder and harder to find a house in Cape Coral and Lee County," said Cape resident Jerry Miller, 61.

But impact fees are taking all of the heat for the situation.

"Affordable housing is not available now. I don't think you can blame impact fees or water and sewer fees," Councilwoman Dolores Bertolini said. The trend toward high-end housing, not just in Cape Coral, started about six years ago and led to the current conditions, Bertolini said.

The city is making decisions now that past city councils should have made, said Councilman Mickey Rosado, who is researching affordable housing options.

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