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County may lose millions in impact fees

Rollback was meant to spur construction

By [Kate Spinner](#)

Published Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2008 at 4:30 a.m.

CHARLOTTE COUNTY — A temporary impact fee reduction that took effect in January will cost the county millions in revenue this year, it is estimated.

Had the fees been rolled back last year, it would have cost the county more than \$14 million, according an estimate by county budget director Ray Sandrock.

Losses have not been estimated for this year, but predictions of the number of commercial and residential projects that will be built is only slightly lower than last year, Sandrock said.

The commission decided to reduce impact fees, used to offset the cost of new roads, parks and other infrastructure, in an attempt to spark

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more construction.

The potential for losing millions from the rollback, however, became clear to commission members two weeks ago during a hearing on Victoria Estates, a development proposed near Punta Gorda.

The concern that the county could lose out on about \$6 million in impact fees from the development led commissioners to consider rescinding the impact fee rollback on Tuesday.

But after protests from several home builders, small-business owners and real estate agents, commissioners postponed a decision.

Supporters of the reduction said it has not been in place long enough to prove its value.

"Even talking about increasing impact fees again could put the final nail in our coffin," Suzanne Graham, a representative of the Charlotte DeSoto Building Industry Association, told commission members. "Give it more time to see if what you have done last year will help this industry."

Commissioners voted in October to reduce the fees to 1998 levels. The lower fees took effect this year.

The 1998 fee for all homes was \$3,000. A 2006 change based fees on square footage and increased the cost of a 2,000-square-foot home to \$8,000.

Commissioner Adam Cummings said reducing the rates might encourage some builders to pursue their projects earlier, but has no long-term benefit.

"What we're attempting to do now is to sell at a loss and make up for what we lost in volume," Cummings said.

Last modified: Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2008 at 3:39 a.m.

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