

# Bartow rejects impact fee waiver

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BARTOW - The city's one-year moratorium on impact fees will not be extended.

Commissioner A.J. Jackson, who's remained opposed to an extension, questioned Nov. 5 whether the one-year moratorium was effective. He said neighboring cities witnessed growth this year that surpassed Bartow's new construction, and none of those cities lifted impact fees.

"The time has come to let it pass," he said.

The city has forfeited an estimated \$275,000 in impact fees for parks and recreation, public facilities and transportation since imposing the moratorium Jan. 1. Commissioners said they had hoped the savings would encourage new development in the city.

Last month, commissioners agreed in principal to waive those fees for another year, prompting City Attorney Sean Parker to present a proposed ordinance at the meeting.

But Commissioner Pat Huff and Mayor Leo Longworth joined Jackson in opposing the extension.

Huff said he didn't think the impact fees would turn anyone away from Bartow. Longworth offered no comment on his decision to oppose the extension.

Jackson said the city has been trying to diversify its revenues, and the impact fees are a step in that direction.

"I don't think ignoring a revenue stream is something we can afford to do," he said.

Commissioner Wayne Lewis, who sought to extend the waiver, said the city may not know how much new construction came about because the moratorium was in place. Commissioner James Clements agreed.

For a standard house, developers pay \$1,050 for transportation, \$821 for public facilities and \$1,459 for parks and recreation, totaling \$3,330 in impact fees. That revenue can be used only to expand the existing infrastructure in those areas.

The county has adopted a similar moratorium, but Bartow is the only city in Polk County to take that step.

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