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Bonita building's new owners won't face impact fee

Council votes to clarify business code language

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The owners of an empty bank building in Bonita Springs won't have to pay tens of thousands of dollars in impact fees to the city when they convert the space.

Planning and zoning Manager John Dulmer said no impact fees will be charged to open a store there or to later convert the space back to a bank because the previous owner paid road impact fees for a bank when it was built in 1998.

The City Council voted 7-0 Wednesday to clarify the language in its code to state that a business that changes the use of a building won't have to pay impact fees.

"They shouldn't have to pay for that impact all over again," City Manager Gary Price said.

Councilwoman Martha Simons said the vote shows "Bonita Springs is a fair place to do business. Come and do business here."

Abe and Danka Asli last May bought the 4,000-square-foot former site of World Savings Bank in the Bonita Bay Plaza at 26851 S. Tamiami Trail. After having difficulty leasing it to a bank, the couple has decided to try to use the building as a small store until they can find a bank tenant.

Abe Asli thanked the council. "It is good not only for us. It is good for the city. It is good for everybody, for hundreds more business people who will try to open something in these bad days."

In unanimous votes, the council also:

- Voted with no discussion to hear at the council's zoning meeting at 9 a.m. Jan. 25 Wynn Properties' zoning special exception request to allow live entertainment at The Stage restaurant/nightclub in the Sunshine Plaza at 9144 Bonita Beach Road. The business is using a temporary entertainment license in the meantime.

- Authorized a one-day program in conjunction with the Lee County Sheriff's Office and a pharmacist to collect people's unwanted or expired pills.

Councilman Richard Ferreira proposed the program as a way of getting the drugs out of the hands of teenagers and young adults. "It's becoming a cottage industry," Ferreira said. "We can continue maybe twice a year by getting 100,000 of these pills off the street. Believe me, it would be a real boost to our young children."

Sgt. David Piasecki said: "We're willing to give any manpower assistance needed to run the program."

The city will advertise the program on its Web site and Comcast Channel 98.

- Appointed Councilman John Spear as an additional Bonita Springs representative to the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization, which prioritizes transportation projects within Lee for state or

federal funding.

- Reappointed Bob Thinnes to the Tree Advisory Board and authorized staff to begin advertising to fill a vacancy on the board.
