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Builders rush to beat Indian River County impact fee hike

Home plans filled tables and floors of the Community Development Department to avoid today's new impact fees.

By Henry A. Stephens

staff writer

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INDIAN RIVER COUNTY — Vero Beach general contractor Orville Shelton loves paying impact fees, he said Thursday.

"You get roads, schools, everything like that," he said. "I think it's great. But my client wants to save money."

So Shelton was among several builders who filed scores of building-permit applications with the county in the last two weeks to beat today's new impact fees.

Thursday was the last day before eight new fees go into effect and mean \$6,500 on top of the current price for a person buying a home at the county's most common size, between 1,500 and 2,499 square feet.

Shelton said he is building a 4,000-square-foot home in Castaway Cove for a California customer. He estimated his impact fee for roads alone would be \$4,800.

"But it would be \$10,000 tomorrow," he said.

Today the county starts charging new fees intended to offset the demands of newcomers on library space, landfill space, jail space, parks, public buildings, schools, fire-paramedic stations and sheriff's deputies' equipment.

County Planning Director Stan Boling estimated the rush to beat the new fees would bring about 500 more plans than normal into the Community Development Department.

"This week we've had 142 plans in, and in a normal week it would be about 40 or 50," Boling said.

That didn't count the plans stacked on tables and floors in the hall and inside offices. Department staffers stamped them Thursday as being received before the fee increase, but didn't have the time to process the data.

Boling said several staffers would be in Saturday to enter the plans into the department records.

Frank Pepe, project manager for Ironwood Properties Inc. of Delray Beach, brought in the largest number of plans Thursday.

In four large boxes, he and his staff carried in about 50 single-family home plans for the Antilles subdivision in Winter Beach.

The County Commission approved Antilles in August to have 260 lots on 134 acres on the south side of Quay Dock Road.

But while the subdivision was approved, the lots haven't yet been platted, or legally laid out, Boling said.

So Pepe could only file plans and get the lower impact fees on the clubhouse and 18 homes, representing 18 original parcels.

"They can't get building permits until they file plats," Boling said. "So for those lots that don't yet exist, they can't get building permits now."

Pepe left with about 30 of his plans. Boling said Ironwood Properties would have to file a subdivision plat before it could seek further permits. By that time, the new impact fees would be in place.

Pepe said he and his staff were "fairly rushed" to get the plans together by Thursday. But he had little comment on the fee increase awaiting future plans.

"It is what it is," he said.

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