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## Cape Coral City Council won't support impact fee reduction

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The mayor's plan to revive the utility expansion program crumbled Monday, leaving the \$1 billion project mired in uncertainty.

Contractors last month were poised to start the \$68 million project that would bring utilities to the SW 6-7 area when a tie vote on the City Council derailed the project. The council would have needed five votes to go forward with the expansion.

Feichthaler made another push during Monday's council meeting to lower impact fees assessed to those who receive the utilities. Those who tie into the city's sewer and water systems now pay a \$6,750 fee to offset the impact on the city's water filtration and treatment facilities. Feichthaler wanted it cut by \$1,500.

Feichthaler said he would have voted for the project if he had received support for the lower fees.

"We have a blessing and a curse as council members to have control of the purse strings," Feichthaler said. "And if we say we're not going to tolerate a certain level of spending, it's not going to happen. I'm not going to waver one inch."

It's a move, councilwoman Dolores Bertolini said, that shifts the cost of the facility expansion to utility rate-payers.

"There's no other way to pay for this reduction," Bertolini said.

Council agreed with Bertolini and failed to endorse Feichthaler's plan.

Only those council members who voted against the expansion in the SW 6-7 area can bring the issue back up for a vote. Along with the mayor, Tim Day, Bill Deile and Pete Brandt voted against going forward with the project.

None showed any signs Monday of changing their vote.

The council's move contradicts a recommendation from an eight-member committee charged with studying the utility expansion program. The Utility Expansion Program Committee recommended the city install water, sewer and irrigation utilities to the 6,700 property owners in the SW 6-7 area and let the contract with MWH, the company overseeing the project, expire in 2011.

MWH has already secured bids from contractors wishing to install utilities in the SW 6-7 area, which includes properties south of Pine Island Road in the area around Chiquita Boulevard. Owing to the sagging market, MWH officials have said, the bids hit record lows.

If the council had approved the project, homeowners in the area would have paid about \$10,700 in a special assessment. That assessment is meant to pay for the local water, sewer and irrigation lines. Property owners would have to pay it along with the impact fee.

## Farm animals forbidden

After countless complaints of Cape residents housing goats, chickens, kangaroos or monkeys on small city lots, the council enacted a law that forbids non-domestic animals in residential neighborhoods unless allowed by state or federal statutes.

Before Monday, nothing in the Cape's code book restricted the type of animals residents could keep on their property.

"I've been waiting a long time for this ordinance," said Kevin McGrail, who lives in the southeast Cape. For the past year, a flock of roosters next door to McGrail periodically wakes him with 4 a.m. crows.

"It's really overdue," McGrail added.

Councilman Tim Day remembered complaints about a homeowner without a fence who tied string to his chickens to keep them from wandering off, one with a pair of goats and another who kept a cage filled with screeching monkeys.

"We really did take an enormous amount of time to make sure we got this right," Day said.

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