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Collier commissioners approve new law enforcement impact fee

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UPDATE — Collier County has adopted its 12th impact fee.

On Tuesday, Collier commissioners unanimously approved a law enforcement impact fee on new construction. This fee gives money to Sheriff Don Hunter so he can handle budget increases tied to growth.

Impact fees are onetime assessments on new construction that are intended to make growth pay for growth. They are assessed for each new home and business built in the county and paid by developers, who typically pass them on to consumers in the form of higher prices.

The impact fee will go into effect Aug. 1.

Money collected from the law enforcement impact fee could only be used to handle growth. It cannot be used for any of the sheriff's existing needs.

The impact fee will charge about \$95 for a single-family home, \$2,715 for a 10,000-square-foot retail space, \$1,079 for a 10,000-square-foot office, \$131 for a 3,000-square-foot church and \$265 for a \$5,000 general industrial building.

The creation of this impact fee is part of a compromise between county commissioners and Hunter over his 2004-05 budget.

Under the compromise, the sheriff's budget for 2004-05 is just under \$123.4 million. The sheriff's budget previously was about \$120.9 million and Hunter had appealed that amount to Gov. Jeb Bush and the Cabinet.

As part of the compromise, commissioners agreed to create the law enforcement impact fee. It is

expected to generate just under \$1 million a year for the sheriff.

The local building industry opposed this fee. Industry leaders contend it will discourage low-income homeowners and businesses from coming to the area because the fee will make it more expensive to build homes and stores.

"This is another setback for workforce housing," Collier Building Industry Association President William Varian said. "I know there are sheriff's deputies who cannot pay to build a house on land they own."

No other county in Florida has 12 impact fees and no one pays as much in impact fees as Collier County, Varian said.

"We understand growth has to pay for growth," Varian said. "But we're way past the limit" of what growth should be paying for.

Taxpayers got caught in a budget fight between the sheriff and commissioners, he said.

Officials with the Sheriff's Office said they had no comment on the impact fee because it was a decision of the commissioners and not the department.

Impact fee coordinator Amy Patterson said the county worked closely with the Sheriff's Office in creation of the impact fee.

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