

Commercial impact fee program expanded for local businesses

Ken Lane, a member of the Naples community. This story is neither endorsed by nor affiliated with this site.

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The Collier County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) has approved changes in the Impact Fee Program for Existing Commercial Redevelopment that will allow additional businesses to participate in the program.

The original program provided qualifying businesses an exemption from the payment of impact fees (excluding water-sewer) for changes of use in existing commercial buildings that have had a certificate of occupancy for at least five years. The BCC has now expanded the program to include buildings that have had a certificate of occupancy for at least three years. Other changes approved by the BCC include eliminating impact fee review for changes of use in order to obtain a zoning certificate and/or a business tax receipt and directing the county manager to explore alternative impact fee rates for specialty medical offices, small medical offices and/or other medical type uses with lesser impacts than a traditional medical office. Additionally, the Board directed that the Impact Fee Ordinance be amended to allow impact fee credits to run in perpetuity with the land until used or transferred.

“The Commercial Impact Fee Program has saved Collier businesses more than \$1.2 million thus far in impact fee payments and the changes approved today should permit many other businesses in our community to realize similar savings,” said BCC Chairman Fred Coyle. “This successful program is a continuation of the Board’s aggressive efforts to help create a business climate that brings new jobs and new investment to our community while, at the same time, helping our existing businesses retain and create job opportunities. If we want new jobs, we need to focus special attention to meeting the needs of small businesses and this program is demonstrating how we are taking a proactive approach to encourage economic recovery and diversification.”

During the program’s first year, 40 applicants participated with 20 of the applicants being new businesses. The amount of impact fee payments that have been exempted thus far totals \$1,266,277, which is a direct savings to the qualifying businesses. Of the 20 applicants that were existing businesses relocating to new space, none of the applicants indicated that they were receiving a lower rent or lease rate due to the program. A majority of the new and existing business applicants indicated they were unaware of the potential impact fee assessments related to changes of use and also stated that they would be unable to move forward with the proposed new business or relocation if the program was not available.

“Collier Building Industry Association (CBIA) endorses any directive of the commission that creates a positive economic impact for our county,” said CBIA President David Aldrich. “This initiative will continue to encourage new business while assisting commercial property owners in leasing or selling their vacant space.

The Impact Fee Program for Existing Commercial Redevelopment went into effect on March 30, 2009 and was initially established for a two-year period. The program does not waive existing zoning laws. Any relocation of a new or existing business into an existing facility generates the need for a zoning certificate which verifies that the new business location is properly zoned to allow for the business to legally operate at the new location and the subsequent issuing of a Business Tax Receipt from the Collier County Tax Collector.

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