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Ailing building industry gets a break

By [Doug Sword](#)

Published Thursday, April 24, 2008 at 4:30 a.m.

SARASOTA COUNTY — County commissioners voted Wednesday to delay a planned 47 percent increase in road impact fees on new homes because of worries that the boost would lead to further job losses in the ailing construction industry.

There are builders doing work now for little or no profit just to keep from
PHOTO / SARASOTA HERALD TRIBUNE

laying off their crews, said Commissioner Nora Patterson.

The delay had been sought by business groups including the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce and the Argus Foundation.

The road impact fee for a new 1,000-square-foot home is \$4,417. The proposal was to raise it to \$6,512 as of June 16. That increase will be delayed until at least June 2009.

The decision, though, translates into \$7 million less to build new roads or widen overcrowded ones.

Commissioner Jon Thaxton proposed a 24 percent increase in the road impact fees, effective in June, and putting off the full increase until next year. Only Commissioner Joe Barbetta supported that amendment. Commissioners Paul Mercier, Shannon Staub and Patterson voted against Thaxton's plan.

Mercier said the delay would only last as long as the local economy struggled, and after that "all bets are off."

Historically, though, the county has not raised impact fees while the economy was strong, Thaxton said. Impact fees actually fell during the 1990s and have only risen above 1991 levels in the past two years.

Meanwhile, concerned about the loss of hotel rooms, commissioners reduced the road impact fee for hotels and motels by 31 percent. The fee had been \$2,972 per room, but it was reduced to \$2,052 per room.

Last modified: April 24, 2008 4:54am

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