



Impact fee waiver in Cape Coral to face vote

Written by

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A proposed road impact fee waiver to promote business development also could mean less money for future road projects in Cape Coral.

The City Council is scheduled to vote on the proposal Feb. 28. Meanwhile, staff has been asked to get more details about how the proposal could affect the road budget, which depends on impact fees for new projects that help meet the demands of growth.

City Councilman Bill Deile said that kind of information is needed before the council can vote.

"We don't have a projection. We can go back and get a projection over what has happened over the past 12 months," said assistant City Manager Carl Schwing. "You could be looking at significant dollars."

One case the city is working on involves about \$40,000 that could be waived, Schwing said.

The proposal sets up an 18-month period

when city officials can waive road impact fees to help a business expand or relocate. The waiver would be available to business increasing traffic around an existing building, according to Schwing.

He used the example of a medical office moving into a building that was erected for general office use.

The builder paid an impact fee based on the traffic impact of a general office building.

Traffic impact for medical office use is more intense, so an additional impact fee would be assessed against the new user. The city would waive the additional fee to encourage the new user to fill the space, Schwing said.

"We're trying to fill space that is now empty in the city," Schwing said.

Cape Coral's vacancy rate for office space is 16.5 percent, said Gary Tasman, executive director at Commercial Property

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of Southwest Florida.

The waiver will help the city fill space, Tasman said.

The proposal is part of a series of incentives the city is planning to promote economic development and remain competitive with other localities, Schwing said.

"Right now our mission is to get any business we can. Beggars can't be choosy," said Councilman Marty McClain.

Road impact fees collected by the city dropped with the real estate market's decline.

Cape Coral collected \$7.9 million in 2007, but \$692,460 in 2009.

There are no major projects planned that will need impact fee support, said acting Public Works Director Steve Neff.

Impact fees can be spent only on new roads, Schwing said. They can't be used to pave existing roads.

The city uses impact fees to pay down loans for the Del Prado and Santa Barbara Boulevard projects, which help meet the demand of growth.

Without impact fees waived for economic development there is risk the city would have to use property tax dollars for the roads, Schwing said.

That means there is no money for projects

such as extending Trafalgar Parkway from Santa Barbara Boulevard to Del Prado Boulevard, said Councilman Chris Chulakes-Leetz.

Mayor John Sullivan is scheduled to raise that extension and a similar extension for Gleason Parkway at this morning's Transportation Advisory Commission meeting.

He wants to pay for the work with bridge toll money.

The public meeting begins at 9 a.m. in City Hall.

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