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Jefferson County Commission eliminates impact fee department, director's position

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CHARLES TOWN, W.Va.

Following a recommendation from the outgoing county administrator, the Jefferson County Commission Thursday voted to eliminate the county's impact fee department and abolish the director's position.

Tim Boyde, who resigned as county administrator in January, suggested in a confidential exit memorandum that since the housing downturn, impact fees are only "trickling in and the justification for a full-time impact fee coordinator does not exist."

The commissioners, on a motion by Commissioner Dale Manuel, voted 3-2 to dismantle the capital planning and impact fee department and terminate the job of F. Mark Schiavone, its longtime coordinator.

There was no effective date in Manuel's motion specifying when Schiavone's termination would take effect or if he was to be officially notified of his dismissal.

Commissioner Frances Morgan took it to mean that he was to leave office immediately.

Commissioners Walt Pellish and Patsy Noland voted with Manuel. Morgan and Commissioner Lyn Widmyer cast dissenting votes.

Under the shakeup, the department's assistant director, who collects the impact fees, will be transferred to the engineering department. The employee who handles the department's information technology responsibilities will report to Paul Shroyer, the county's newly hired director of finance.

The discussion and action took place in open session. Schiavone was not present. He did not immediately return a message Thursday night.

Schiavone was not mentioned by name by Manuel, Pellish and Noland until well into the discussion and only when Widmyer identified him.

Noland, the commission's president, said Schiavone is not being terminated, that his department is being eliminated.

Manuel's motion also called for the county to hire a consultant to take over Schiavone's duties "on an as-needed basis."

Morgan warned her colleagues that their actions were shameful and wrong. She and Widmyer said eliminating the department with no time for a reasonable transition would create chaos.

Manuel later agreed to amend his motion to delay dismantling the department for 30 days and to follow employment laws.

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“The impact fee program won’t fall apart,” Noland said.

Manuel said eliminating the impact fee department will save the county about \$200,000 a year.

Widmyer reminded him of the cost of hiring a consultant to replace Schiavone who earns around \$74,000 a year. She also said the commissioners have recently hired two employees for the county’s new maintenance facility, hired Shroyer as its chief finance officer and are trying to recruit a full-time human resources director at a salary of \$70,000 plus.

Boyd, in his exit memo, recommended that a part-time, not full-time, human resources director be hired.

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