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Lakeland Won't Increase Impact Fees While Economy Continues To Struggle

Commissioners don't want to hike fees in a struggling economy.

By [Kyle Kennedy](#)
THE LEDGER

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LAKELAND | Impact fees in Lakeland are staying put for now.

City commissioners voted unanimously Tuesday to keep police, fire and parks impact fees assessed on new housing at current levels.

Before Tuesday's vote, commissioners said they were unwilling to raise any impact fees while the economy continues to struggle.

City officials had originally wanted to increase impact fees for police, fire and parks and recreation - following recommendations from a mandated study - but last month Community Development Director Jim Studiale said he and other officials would settle for just the parks impact fees being raised.

Commissioners cooled to that idea during an agenda review session Friday, saying any impact fee hike during the recession would be perceived negatively.

"I was concerned that if we raised them this year the private sector would see Lakeland taking a position that's another indicator of more taxes," Commissioner Don Salvage told The Ledger on Friday.

The Lakeland Chamber of Commerce also voiced its opposition to an impact fee increase in a June 24 letter to commissioners.

With the goal of having development pay for itself, impact fees are paid by the developers of new buildings, who in turn pass the cost to the building owners.

The parks impact fee measure would have raised fees from \$2,707 to \$2,885 on single-family homes, \$2,123 to \$2,242 for apartments and \$1,317 to \$1,391 for manufactured homes.

On Friday, Studiale said he knew the parks fee increase would be a difficult proposal in light of the economy.

"It's a tough time. The economy plays so big," Studiale told The Ledger.

[Kyle Kennedy can be reached at kyle.kennedy@theledger.com or 863-802-7584.]

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