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Monroe may cut school impact fee to spur building

By [Alejandro Dominguez](#), Herald Writer

MONROE -- The City Council is considering reducing the fees developers are charged to reduce the impact of growth on schools.

A 7 p.m. meeting is set for Tuesday in the council chambers, 806 W. Main St.

The fees have become a hot issue during previous council and Monroe School Board meetings.

The city is considering giving a 50 percent discount to developers as a way to attract more development to the city.

The goal is to build enough homes and apartments for future population growth, economic development manager Jeff Sax said. The reasoning is that with more homes, there will be a larger tax base to pay for future levies, he said.

School district staff said things are not that simple.

Having a larger population does not mean more money for schools, district's spokeswoman Rosemary O'Neil said.

With school district levies, voters are asked for a flat amount that is spread among them. Schools don't get more money until the next levy is approved, she said.

Mitigation fees are a different source of revenue, used to help pay for the impact new students bring to schools. The money is used, for instance, to add portable classrooms or create new learning space. The amount collected rarely finances the building of a new school, O'Neil said.

If the change is approved, it means as of Jan. 1, 2013, developers would pay \$1,984, compared with the current \$2,976 for each new single family home; and \$3,172, down from \$4,804, for each multi-family unit.

In early October, the Monroe School Board President Tom MacIntyre wrote a letter to Mayor Robert Zimmerman, council members and members of the Planning Commission saying that changing the fees will weaken the school district which, in turn, would discourage people from moving to the city.

"Efforts to encourage prosperity in our community should look at changing school mitigation fees as the very last option," MacIntyre wrote.

New housing would attract many demographics. There is no way to know who would buy the homes or if they are going to have children, Sax said.

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