

## At least three Lee commissioners leaning toward impact fee moratorium

By SABINA BHASIN

Tuesday, January 15, 2013

At least three Lee County commissioners either support or are leaning toward supporting a 2-year moratorium on impact fees to give the local housing industry a boost.

But they won't make any decisions until the public weighs in first.

Commissioners discussed the proposal for about 15 minutes during their Management and Planning meeting on Monday. They agreed to host a workshop in the coming weeks for a more in-depth discussion about the potential impact of the moratorium and to allow residents to voice their opinions. A date hasn't been set.

"I am certain folks will want to do this," Commissioner John Manning said. "I am optimistic, but we will go through the necessary steps and hopefully we can reach a conclusion in 30 days."

Manning spearheaded the discussion, and has support from at least one other commissioner, Cecil Pendergrass.

"I'm using it as a tool to stimulate the economy and offer tax relief to the business owners, first time home buyers and citizens," said Pendergrass, who campaigned on tax relief.

Like Manning, who said the purpose of the moratorium is to help the housing industry rebound, Pendergrass said the moratorium could also bring jobs to the county. Other counties that have tried similar moratoriums have seen a housing rebound and more jobs, he said.

Commissioner Larry Kiker also said he's leaning toward allowing the moratorium.

"It can bring more jobs and that needs to be a huge consideration," Kiker said.

Supporters of the moratorium need a majority vote of the five-member commission to change the ordinance.

Impact fees are imposed on new construction and used for new development in schools, roads, parks and emergency services. Commissioner Frank Mann said last week he does not support the moratorium, because impact fees are necessary to pay for growth.





© 2013 Scripps Newspaper Group — Online