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## Bonita Springs may waive downtown impact fees

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New businesses in downtown Bonita Springs may not have to pay impact fees.

The Bonita Springs City Council discussed Wednesday the possibility of waiving them.

Impact fees are assessments that new businesses pay so the city can build new roads, for example.

The waived fees would possibly encourage redevelopment in the downtown area along Old 41 Road.

"If this doesn't work, I don't know what will," said Mayor Ben Nelson, who brought up the issue at the meeting.

The idea behind waiving or lowering the fees is increased tax revenue from new businesses would make up for any lost impact fee revenue.

"I'm intrigued by this idea," said Councilman John Spear.

Spear did express concerns about lowering impact fees in one area, but not others.

"It might be a slippery slope that we don't want to go down," he said.

But Councilwoman Martha Simons said she likes the idea and thinks this could spur redevelopment of the area.

"We just have to spark it," she said.

The council also heard a 90-day update on the new community development department, run by the private engineering firm CH2M Hill.

"We are starting to identify the bugs and the issues," said community development director Beverly Tew.

Since opening June 30, the department has issued 1,779 building permits, done 1,261 inspections and collected more than \$350,000 in impact fees.

Council also heard a presentation from Paul Cartwright about his concerns that Southwest Florida Recycling Center is doing things on its property outside its current zoning uses, such as using a mulcher and spreading dirt instead of having it removed.

Council members were not allowed to act, but urged City Manager Gary Price to look into sending a cease-and-desist letter to the company to stop all activities that are not permitted.

The council also approved a resolution to make the city gopher tortoise friendly, the construction of

buffer walls and fencing along East Terry Street and revisions to the city's parking ordinance.

The council also issued special events permits for a circus Nov. 20-23 at the Naples-Fort Myers Greyhound Track and the Rotary Holidayfest on Dec. 6 at Sunshine Ace Plaza.

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