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Charlotte County to reconsider impact fee rollback

Officials say the tax reduction came with unintended consequences

The Law of Unintended Consequences may kill Charlotte County's temporary impact fee tax reduction.

Charlotte County Commission Chairman Tom D'Aprile requested Tuesday that the county reconsider a rollback in impact fees enacted in October 2007, citing concerns over moves made by at least one large-scale developer that could leave Charlotte County footing the bill for millions of dollars in road improvements -- projects that would normally be financed by major commercial and residential developments.

"I tried to do the right thing. Unfortunately it came back and bit me," D'Aprile said. "I take full responsibility for that."

D'Aprile said the temporary impact fee reduction was enacted with the hope of stimulating the local building industry and helping smaller businesses, not large-scale developers.

Growth Management Director Jeff Ruggieri said Tuesday that "unintended consequences" of an impact fee rollback could cost Charlotte County millions. The issue was highlighted at Tuesday's meeting in a conflict with two developments represented by land-use attorney Geri Waksler -- Charlotte Commons, a commercial project at Veterans Boulevard and Kings Highway, and Victoria Estates, a residential project from Benderson Development. Because of their reduced impact fee rate, the developers would no longer be required to pay for major projects, such as road improvements.

Commissioner Dick Loftus, who opposed the impact fee rollback in October, said the loss of revenue, combined with Florida voters' passage of Amendment 1 property tax reform, could leave Charlotte County in an even more difficult financial situation.

"It's going to hurt us very deeply," Loftus said.

Although none of the developers broke any laws, Commissioner Tom Moore said he's frustrated by their move, which he called "opportunistic."

"Like they say, it's just business," Moore said. "But I'm pretty (mad) about it. I think they're taking advantage of it."

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