



## County not ready to lower impact fees

WBBH-TV

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COLLIER COUNTY: Collier County Commissioners unanimously voted against a plan some business owners argue could fuel a struggling building industry.

In a time of dwindling development, any new construction in Collier is a rare sight.

"We don't have any ray of hope right now," said C.J. Hueston with the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce.

For three hours on Tuesday, builders and business owners pleaded with Commissioners for help.

"We need a jolt for our community in '09," Hueston said.

Many support an idea to reduce impact fees, the one-time charges on new construction to help offset costs of roads and schools.

Under the plan, those fees in Collier, which are among the highest in the state, would be lowered to 2007 levels and stay frozen for two years.

"This is one piece of the puzzle," Hueston said.

But Commissioners are not sure lowering the fees will bring back the jobs and growth lost in the economic downturn. They also warn it could mean higher taxes to make up for less money coming in.

Commissioners voted against the plan, at least for now.

When asked what effect lowering impact fees would really have, Collier Commissioner Fred Coyle responded, "Zero - absolutely zero. We could eliminate impact fees tomorrow morning and it would not turn around the economy."

Commissioners are asking the county staff to come back within a month with a report on the exact monetary effect lowering impact fees would have.

"If in fact they do not roll it back, I think it's going to send a large signal to our business community that they are not listening," Hueston said.

It would also mean rebuilding their plan to create more construction.

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