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## Editorial: Being careful with those impact fees

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Yavapai County is toying with the idea of suspending its road impact fees, thinking perhaps that this will promote growth in hard times. However, the idea immediately stings with unfairness.

Imagine if Camp Verde or Clarkdale suddenly decided to temporarily lift their impact fees. The scenario is obvious.

If the Smiths built their homes last year, they had to cough up the dough for the impact fee. But the Jones family next door decided to build this year and won't have to pay the fee. Then when the recession eases and the impact fees are reinstated, Mr. Hernandez will have to pay the fee when he builds next door to Mr. Jones.

Impact fees are defined to alleviate the stress on infrastructure and roads of each additional house or business that comes in. To say that the Smiths had an impact in the past and the Hernandezes will have an impact in the future but the Joneses will not have an impact now does not ring true under that definition.

And, as Camp Verde knows and the county should know, when a government decision rings false, it opens the bag for lawsuits. At the very least, there will be demands for reimbursement by those who already shelled out the impact fees in good times.

Rescinding fees does seem like a feel-good, stimulating idea, but it will leave many current homeowners feeling ripped off.

Delaying or putting a temporary freeze on impact fees, on the other hand, might work better. New builders could have a "stay" put on their fees until a later date. Even that is its own can of worms.

That is why the county should think twice about retooling impact fees at all. Though new buildings for homes or businesses are few and far between these days, they still have the same impact on infrastructure and roads that they have always had.

So any change to impact fees will have to be fair for all. Or "impact" fees will have to be completely redefined.

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