



February 26, 2008

Lee commission delays impact-fee vote

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Lee County Commissioners today voted to put off a much-anticipated decision on whether to eliminate or decrease impact fees.

Commissioners told staff to report back to the board in two weeks with more information before it makes a decision. More than 175 people, most from the building industry, attended the public comment portion of the meeting.

Impact fees are one-time charges on new construction to pay the cost of providing and expanding services and facilities benefiting the development.

Road impact fees hit builders the hardest. In February 2007, the county increased road fees from nearly \$3,000 to almost \$9,000 for a single-family home. Commissioners will consider rolling back to the previous level, at least temporarily.

The Lee County Building Industry Association has supported eliminating impact fees or at least trimming them, in hopes it would boost new commercial construction and to some extent home building. Representatives said putting off the decision for two weeks will halt business during that time as builders wait to see if fees will be lowered.

Due to the building slump, the county collected 74 percent less in impact fees in the 2007 fiscal year than in 2006.

There were 2,248 single family home permits issued in 2007 in unincorporated Lee County, compared to 6,994 in 2006.

10:55 a.m.

An intense debate about lowering or eliminating impact fees is ongoing at the Lee County Commission meeting in downtown Fort Myers.

More than 175 people are in attendance. Discussion on the issue began around 10:10 a.m. and is likely to continue until at least noon. Commissioners can make a decision at this meeting or choose to delay a vote and bring the topic back at a future meeting.

Impact fees are one-time charges on new construction to pay the cost of providing and expanding services and facilities benefiting the development. Road impact fees are the most debated. In February 2007, the county increased road fees from nearly \$3,000 to almost \$9,000 for a single-family home. Commissioners will consider rolling back to the previous level, at least temporarily. That would cost the county \$6.7 million in road impact fees over one year, according to county estimates.

Editors note

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