

Martin commissioners decide to temporarily halt impact fees for new construction

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MARTIN COUNTY — Martin County residents and businesses will see impact fees lowered for about a year, as the county commission Tuesday decided to only charge impact fees for road construction. Left out of the equation were impact fees for such things as public buildings, law enforcement, parks and libraries.

For residential properties, this means that a home between 1,101 square feet and 2,300 square feet would have an impact fee reduction from the current \$6,956 to \$4,272. The county's consultant, James Nicholas had recommended an increase of more than 30 percent, to \$9,092, but the county commission rejected that recommendation, and also disallowed the recommendation by the Impact Fee Review Committee that would have made the residential fee approximately \$4,500.

In the non-residential arena, an office building under 100,000 square feet would see its impact fee lowered from today's \$4,276 to \$1,927. Nicholas had recommended lowering the fee for this type of building from \$4,276 to \$2,608.

Martin County faces over \$57 million on bond debt to build road, and each year pays \$3.2 million to service this debt. It is anticipated that the impact fees will only bring in \$1.5 million, leaving the county to search for other alternatives to getting funds.

County commissioners were most concerned about the debt obligation for the road construction.

"If these projects don't happen, then the roads don't get fixed and we don't get the income from these projects," Vice Chairman Doug Smith said.

But, as Commissioner Sarah Heard said, "If we reduce impact fees, then we will stick that burden on existing tax payers. This commission has several big bond issues and if we don't get the funds from impact fees then we need to get them from somewhere else."

Jim Sherman showed the commissioners three alternatives, all of which would lower the impact fees presently imposed. Of these alternatives, the commission voted 3-2 with Sarah Heard and Chairman Susan Valliere dissenting to only collect impact fees

for roads.

Valliere told the commission before the vote that she couldn't support this recommendation because "we don't know what our revenues will be and we have debt service that needs to be paid. We're looking at a nasty budget session, we could be furloughing staff. I don't believe that the impact fees make that much difference."



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