



Possible Tarpon Impact Fee Hike Slammed

By Mark Schantz | The Suncoast News

Published: November 1, 2008

TARPON SPRINGS - The city's proposed hike in impact fees could make construction of affordable housing more costly for builders, according to a builder who has been working with the TARPON SPRINGS Housing Authority.

The builder, Joe Heidenreich, president of the TARPON SPRINGS-based Neighborhood Homes of West Florida, said the city should give a break to builders creating affordable housing.

During Tuesday night's City Commission meeting, Heidenreich said planned local affordable housing projects in of the Union Academy Neighborhood, such as Mango Circle, would be more costly to construct if the city increases impact fees without giving any financial relief to this type of development.

Incentives should be given to nonprofit groups looking to construct affordable housing in the city, he added.

The city last updated its impact fees in 1991. Under the proposed changes, which if adopted will take affect in February 2009, builders would be charged \$2,312 for each residential home. The current fee is \$1,341 per unit.

Increases would also affect commercial development. The cost to build nonresidential structures will rise, from almost 43 cents a square foot to 68 cents a square foot.

Each year after adoption the fee will be raised or lowed based on the Construction Cost Index published in the magazine Engineering News-Record.

The proposed impact fee increase would come at a time when construction has almost ground to a halt as a result of the poor housing market economy.

The impact on builders could have been a lot greater. The city's consultant, Burton and Associates, initially proposed a fee of \$4,278. The amount would pay 100 percent of the projected impact of growth on police, fire, recreation, library, parks and governmental services, according to Burton.

City commissioners will hold a hearing and final reading on the proposed hike in impact fees at their Tuesday, Nov. 18, meeting.

At that time city staff could provide information on whether relief can be granted to a segment of the building population that provides for affordable housing or whether the rate structure cannot provide for any special exception.

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