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Sarasota County refuses to lower impact fee

By DOUG SWORD

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Sarasota County commissioners voted Tuesday against a proposal to cut impact fees for new construction by 26 percent, expressing doubts that the reduction would help the local economy.

They also approved coming up with a plan later this year that would likely raise fees in areas farther away from the urban core and cut them in places where they want to encourage growth.

In March, the county appeared ready to join other local governments in efforts to spur construction by waiving or cutting impact fees. Manatee County schools and the City of Bradenton have waived fees; Manatee County and North Port slashed road impact fees by half and Charlotte County rolled back impact fees to decade-old levels.

"Those are all feel-good proposals," said Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta. "There's no proof that a reduction in impact fees is going to help the economy."

Commissioners also voted to delay a planned 47 percent increase in impact fees that was to have gone into effect June 1. But some areas might still see that increase. Commissioners plan to debate before Oct. 1 on a plan to vary impact fees in ways to encourage future growth in some areas and discourage it in others.

The new plan will likely be linked to a county proposal to allow denser mixed-use development along U.S. 41 and other major roads.

The mix of commercial and residential developments in the same location is seen as a way to reduce the number of automobile and truck trips on the area's roads because people will shop in their own neighborhoods. The higher densities would also make public transit more economical. The idea would be to encourage that type of redevelopment by cutting impact fees.

This story appeared in print on page BN1

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1. JBRUNO999 says...

May 6, 2009 7:37:24 am

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Again, the city commission does an excellant job, putting the needs of the community (i.e. all the people) over the bluster a few businesmen who hope to line their pockets with dough, at the expenses of them paying the same, not more, taxes. And the tired line that these businesses must be catered to because create jobs in the community is also misleading. Sure they create jobs, but at the expenses of many others. I know. I know. The trickle down effect. I just don't buy it.

And I'll give you a hint. Anything backed by the Board of Realtors, and I'm not saying this particular item was, mostly likely favors the Realtors themselves trying to ignite their own private economy.

I now expect a bunch of Realtors to repond with outrage. But the truth does hurt.

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