

# POLITICS

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## St. Lucie planning lien to collect impact fees in Port St. Lucie

By [Jim Reeder](#)

*Palm Beach Post Staff Writer*

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Port St. Lucie officials have voted to quit collecting some of St. Lucie County's development fees, but that doesn't mean owners of new buildings are off the hook.

They could be paying double Oct. 1 when Port St. Lucie's new \$2,712 fee for roads, parks and public buildings is added to the county's \$2,917 fee for the same facilities.

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Port St. Lucie's building department now collects the county fee when it issues a building permit, but council members have decided to quit collecting the fee for the county.

Instead, the city will collect its own \$2,712 in impact fees.

St. Lucie County has come up with another method of collecting its fees because the city won't extend the current agreement.

It will send a bill for the county fee to owners of new buildings, then place a lien on the property of owners who don't pay. County officials will go to court to foreclose the lien if it's not paid within one year.

Treasure Coast Builders Association spokesman Don Santos questioned the fairness of two fees and said the plan could cause major problems for owners and builders.

"Every new building has some impact, but the fee can't be twice as high just because both

of them want the money," he said. "There's just so much money, and it should be divided fairly."

Once a lien is filed by the county, bank financing will stop, he said.

"When a builder goes for his next draw of money, the bank won't give it until the lien is paid," he said. "If the impact fee is not in the bank financing, the owner will have to dig into his pocket."

Getting money for a down payment is the single biggest obstacle to homeownership, and many buyers won't have \$2,917 to pay the lien, he said.

"Building will come to a halt until the lien is paid," Santos said.

Port St. Lucie plans to collect its money before a building permit is issued, so the county's fee could be a problem.

The county's planning and zoning commission will review the proposal at 6 p.m. Thursday and make a recommendation for county commission action.

Port St. Lucie Mayor Bob Minsky is irate about the county's plan.

"For the second year, they're cutting the tax rate and then wanting more money from Port St. Lucie that benefits the county," Minsky said. "I have absolutely no sympathy. They've been bleeding the city for years, and enough is enough. We deal with the impacts of our residents."






But city residents drive on roads outside the city limits, use county courts and other buildings and use county parks, county officials said.

Some city council members said they might be willing to give the county some impact-fee money for specific projects.

County Commission Chairman Frannie Hutchinson has asked to schedule a joint meeting for more discussions. Minsky said he's not interested but will bring it to the full council.

"I guess the political thing is you have to be willing to talk," Minsky said. "We gave them a year's notice we would quit collecting for them, and they waited until the 11th hour."

Minsky said he doesn't believe it is legal for the county to impose fees in addition to the city's, but county officials said they have been told it is legal.

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