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Cape Coral mayor eyes impact-fee reduction

By Don Ruane

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Originally posted on September 18, 2007

Cape Coral's utilities impact fee could be cut about \$2,400 for some residents in the near future, Mayor Eric Feichthaler said Monday.

The fee would drop from \$6,750 to \$4,309 under his plan.

The change would help people in the Southwest 5 and future utilities expansion areas, Feichthaler said. The city will cut back in other areas to make up for the lost income from the fees.

Property owners in those areas pay impact fees when service becomes available and they hook up to the lines. The fees help pay for a portion of the project and other work to expand the capacity of the water and sewer plants.

Councilmen Chris Berardi and Tom Hair promptly gave their support to the proposal, which Feichthaler plans to put before council as an ordinance in a few weeks.

The change is needed because of the economic conditions at this time, Feichthaler said.

The reduction would apply to homeowners who received a certificate of occupancy prior to Dec. 31, 2006, he said.

Altering the fee could mean some areas of the city could get utilities sooner than expected, while others might have to wait longer, City Manager Terry Stewart said.

Berardi also said that he wants to put three budget control measures on the Jan. 29 ballot.

That's the same ballot that will ask voters statewide if they want to establish a supersized homestead that could change the way property taxes are collected.

"It's good timing. Residents will be up on property tax reform," Berardi said. Berardi proposes to let voters decide whether:

- Excessive revenue in the general fund at the end of the year should be carried over to the next bud
- help reduce property taxes.

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- A spending cap tied to the inflation rate and change in the city's population should be applied to the budget.
- The amount of undesignated reserves should not exceed 10 percent of the general fund.

The supervisor of elections has agreed, as long as Council decides before Oct. 1, to add the issues t ballot, Berardi said.

One public hearing is required before the council can make that decision, he said.

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