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News

Another fee-free year in Putnam?

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Published: Tuesday, February 16, 2010 1:16 AM EST

County commissioners are leaning toward extending the suspension of impact fees on new construction for another year.

"I feel that times are tough and people need all the breaks we can give them right now," Commissioner Nancy Harris said. "I'm not against impact fees, I think we need them, but I just think times are such that we need to do this."

The moratorium was set in motion on March 1, 2009, and was voted by commissioners to run for one year, with the goal to help stimulate the local economy.

Though the purchase of new homes has actually seen a decrease, most commissioners are willing to give it another year.

"Our construction trade and our construction businesses in Putnam County is hurting," Commissioner Ed Taylor said. "The main reason they are hurting is the same reason other folks are hurting with this, and that's the economy in general. But why should we pour insult to injury by putting that impact fee in there on top of what's already a bad situation? If it just puts a few people to work it'll be worth us extending that."

Commission Chairman Chip Laibl agreed.

"Economic times don't warrant impact fees when there's nothing to be impacted," Laibl said.

If no action is taken, the impact fees will be automatically reinstated March 1. Commissioners will discuss the extending the moratorium in their regular meeting one week from today.

Commissioner Brad Purcell said he will also be proposing bigger steps forward in aiding taxpayers.

"Recognizing the economic challenges, I not only plan to support the continued moratorium on impact fees but will be encouraging my colleagues to evaluate all local taxes and fees to reduce the tax burden on our local businesses and families," Purcell said.

Though he was unable to be reached Monday, Kenny Eubanks was the only county commissioner to previously oppose continuing the moratorium.

"It's not putting anyone else to work and it is not selling new homes," Eubanks previously said in a workshop. "We need to look at what will."

According to Paul Myers, a Putnam County Building Official, new single-family homes and new mobile homes have gone down compared to 2008, despite the moratorium.

In 2009, 35 new single-family homes were built, compared to 58 in 2008. In the category of new mobile homes, 37 were purchased in 2009 compared to 48 in 2008.

"The measurements are not doing what we are wanting them to do," Eubanks said.

Builders, however, say that suspending impact fees for another year will help, if even just a little.

"I can't see us turning our backs on those tradesmen when we could help just a little bit, and right now a little bit is a lot," Taylor said.

Regular county commission meetings being at 8:30 a.m. at the county's Governmental Complex, in the county commission meeting room, at 2509 Crill [Ave.in](#) Suite 100.

The next meeting is schedule for Feb. 23.

Commission meetings are open to the public.

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