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## City seeks own impact fee ordinance

By JEFF SCHMUCKER

Brooksville City council members are looking to go in a different direction than Hernando County Commissioners by not decreasing impact fees to 2001 levels.

Instead, city officials may part ways from under the county and takeover impact fee oversight for the city.

During Monday's council meeting at City Hall, three council members agreed they disapproved of rolling back the rates and instead directed staff to create a city impact fee ordinance.

That means impact fees for developers looking to build new housing construction would likely cost more than what county commissioners would charge, although exact rates have not been set. Council members David Pugh and Richard Lewis were absent from the meeting.

City Attorney Jennifer Rey said county commissioners were too quick to approve rolling back impact fees for residential and commercial construction to 2001 levels — from \$9,200 to \$4,848 — before data could be collected to present to council members. She said she and other staff members would be working to gather data and create a proposed ordinance for council members to consider sometime in December.

Throughout discussion, Vice Mayor Lara Bradburn said she disagrees with arguments from county commissioners that decreasing impact fees within the county would result in more developers applying to build in Hernando County and added there is no proof to back up their claims.

"And if that was the case, what other problems could there be," Bradburn said.

Council member Joseph Johnston III agreed along with Mayor Joe Bernardini who opted for city staff to develop an ordinance for the city to handle the impact fees.

"I agree with both of you," Bernardini said, "I think the county opened up Pandora's box with this."

Earlier this month, county commissioners approved rolling back impact fees beginning Dec. 1 in an attempt to help builders and stimulate the economy. They plan to review the effects of the rollback after one year.

If a new ordinance is created, Rey said the city would be responsible for establishing its own impact fee rates along with collections and accounting. Currently, she said the city doesn't have any studies on impact fees and has to instead rely on county data.

In other business, council members:

â€” Unanimously approved purchasing parks equipment not to exceed \$23,675.

â€” Unanimously approved extending the waterline to the south end of Mildred Avenue.

â€” Unanimously approved a revised government broadcasting agreement to allow quarterly \$1,000 payments rather than itemized statements to reduce administrative costs.