

Collection rate on impact fees lowered to zero

by A.J. Puckett

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The Dawson County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously on May 21 to lower the county collection rate on impact fees to zero.

The meeting Thursday also included the second public hearing on the proposed change. The two hearings brought out potential developers, realtors and builders who spoke in support of the change.

Jay Walker, chairman of the Dawson County Chamber of Commerce, applauded the efforts of the board.

"This is what the county needs and I think that it is a very proactive way to approach the problem," said Walker.

There also were several developers that came forward saying that companies had expressed interest in Dawson County since hearing about the possibility of stopping the collection of impact fees.

The change to the ordinance that commissioners passed will lower the county's collection of impact fees to zero. This change will stay in effect until a future Dawson County Board of Commissioners changes the ordinance and reinstates collection.

Since commissioners are unable to bind a future board and keep the collection at zero, they also included a grandfather clause to protect builders who wish to take advantage of the change.

The clause will allow a builder one year from the time that a building permit is granted to have footings in the ground and another year from that time to complete the building and receive a certificate of occupancy, in order to maintain the grandfather protection.

The grandfather clause does not have an impact unless a future board of commissioners decides to raise the collection rate from zero.

"We are trying to promote some growth and make Dawson County an attractive place [in order] to bring businesses here," said District 1 Commissioner Gary Pichon. "The grandfather clause was put in place to prevent a builder from starting a project with no impact fees and then having to pay them because another board decides to charge them again."

According to Pichon, the grandfather clause will allow for protection, but not unlimited protection.

"The two-year limit was placed in the clause because we didn't want to have a bunch of developers coming to Dawson applying for permits and then sitting on their hands," said Pichon. "That doesn't do us any good."