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Commissioners Will Look at Impact Fee Moratorium Alternatives

By [Tom Palmer](#)
THE LEDGER

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BARTOW | County commissioners directed county staffers today to present options for reinstating impact fees at a public hearing Dec. 1.

Commissioners voted in July to impose a six-month moratorium on all impact fees except school impact fees in an attempt to encourage commercial and industrial development.

However, Growth Management Director Tom Deardorff said it was unclear from the figures on development and pre-development activity what effect, if any, the moratorium has caused.

The options that will be under consideration at the Dec. 1 public hearing range from 25 percent to 50 percent of the amount of impact fees allowed to be charged based on the latest study of the amount of fees that are justified by consultant studies.

Commission Chairman Bob English suggested ending the moratorium, but perhaps charging a lower rate for a year.

"We need to continue to institutionalize impact fees," he said, explaining he wants to prevent the creation of another backlog in infrastructure that occurred when impact fees were absent or too low.

But County Commissioner Randy Wilkinson, who was the lone dissenter, wanted to make sure the fees didn't drop too low as suggested in one of the options give to staff to levy fees at 25 percent of the recommended rate.

"When you're in a hole, you need to quit digging," he said, referring to a recent article in Forbes magazine that identified the local housing market as a poor investment.

But Commissioner Ed Smith said the moratorium was never about residential development.

He said many people who criticized the moratorium didn't understand that.

Commissioner Jean Reed, who voted against the moratorium, said she wanted to make sure that new development pays its way to avoid shifting the burden to taxpayers as occurred when commissioners raised taxes in 2005 to fund roads, parks and libraries because of the backlogs that had been created by low or non-existent impact fees.

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