

[Archives Article View](#)

Published on TBNWeekly.com - March 1, 2011

County amends impact fees, some lowered

By SUZETTE PORTER

Article published on Tuesday, March 1, 2011

[Print](#)[E-Mail](#)[Share](#)

CLEARWATER - Pinellas County Commissioners unanimously approved an amendment Feb. 22 that changes transportation impact fees for seven land use categories.

Fees will be reduced for development projects involving condominiums, warehousing, hotels, sit-down restaurants, drive-in restaurants and supermarkets. Fees will increase for development projects involving privately owned libraries (Stetson Law Library).

Brian Smith, Pinellas County Planning director, said the changes were recommended as part of a two-year review done by the Metropolitan Planning Organization. He said further review of the fees would take place after the Florida Legislature Session.

The MPO had been working on a mobility fee and plan in response to Senate Bill 360, which designated Pinellas as a transportation concurrency exception area. The county needed a plan that called for development projects to mitigate traffic impacts through implementation of transportation improvement projects with mobility fees, a staff report said.

Senate Bill 360 was subsequently ruled unconstitutional. The MPO then continued with its regular two-year review, Smith said.

Several people attended the public hearing to request that the commission further amend the impact fee ordinance and lower all the fees by 50 percent on a temporary basis. Staff estimates taking in about \$750,000 in impact fees this year.

Jan Burzas, chairman of the board for the Pinellas Realtor Organization, said lowering the fees would affect the livelihood of real estate sellers and buyers.

Jennifer Doerfel with the Tampa Bay Builders Association told commissioners that for most builders, right now, profit margins were nonexistent. She said it was difficult to keep projects going. She also said Pasco County had recently lowered its impact fees and asked the commissioners to consider doing the same in Pinellas.

"What it means to you is jobs," she said.

Commissioner Ken Welch said compared to other counties, Pinellas was a low-impact fee county. He said while he respected the proposals from the Realtors and builders, "my concern is we're already cutting capital projects from the budget."

Commissioner Nancy Bostock said the current agenda item called for approving amendments that resulted from a routine review, but she agreed more discussion was warranted. She said the county spends millions of dollars on affordable housing and economic development to recruit businesses to the area.

"This is the same thing," she said. "It's a small amount of money, especially if it is temporary."

Shocking Insurance Secrets Exposed

Your auto insurance company is hiding discounts from you. Why? Because if everyone knew this one trick, they would save an average of \$455/year. That's \$455 more in your pocket and \$455 less in theirs. Find out what your lowest monthly payment could be.

Select Your Age: [Calculate New Payment](#)

LowerMyBills.com

Commissioner Neil Brickfield said he thought the public hearing was "the appropriate time to discuss it (lowering fees)." He said he sent an idea to the county attorney that proposes lowering the fees for 23 months.

"It would be a temporary break on fees to help spur jobs and growth," he said.

Commissioner Karen Seel said she would like to look at the issue.

"Any decision now would be premature," she said.

Smith said he wasn't sure impact fees were hindering projects in Pinellas and said staff already allowed credits for improvements done to properties during the development process.

Brickfield believes that lowering the fees would increase development in the area. He said if there were more projects, more fees would come in, offsetting the 50 percent reduction.

County Administrator Bob LaSala suggested the commission revisit the matter after the legislative session.

Ordinance reenacted

Commissioners unanimously approved an ordinance designating the county sheriff as chief correctional officer.

According to Robert A. Gualtieri, chief deputy and general counsel for the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, the ordinance was administrative in nature and not really a new ordinance as reported by Tampa Bay Newspapers on Feb. 17.

In his e-mail to members of the PCSO on Feb. 21, he explained that the ordinance was "simply a formality to fix an oversight by the BCC and the County Attorney's office and changes nothing regarding the sheriff's longstanding jail responsibilities in Pinellas County."

The e-mail said the county first designated the sheriff as chief correctional officer in 1987.

"Several years ago, the BCC and County Attorney's office re-codified all of the Pinellas County ordinances and in error omitted Ordinance 87-49 from the newly issued set of ordinances. This omission was recently brought to light and the ordinance the BCC will consider tomorrow (Feb. 22) just 'reenacts' the previous ordinance corrects the oversight. There is nothing 'new' in the ordinance that has any effect on PCSO members or current agency operations."

Change in alcohol hours for adult clubs

County Attorney Jim Bennett said he had been requested to ask the commissioners to consider extending the hours alcohol can be served at adult-use establishments to match other county businesses.

Bennett said he had contacted the sheriff, who had no objection.

Brickfield suggested that consideration be given to nonprofits, such as VFW Hall's that might like to have a fundraiser and sell alcohol earlier on Sunday than allowed. He said it would be by permit during special events.

Bennett said he thought a provision already existed that would allow for special events. He said he would look to see how it related to nonprofits.

Article published on Tuesday, March 1, 2011

Copyright © Tampa Bay Newspapers: All rights reserved.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Printable Version | Close Window | E-mail article | Share |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|

© Tampa Bay Newspapers: All rights reserved.