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County board to vote on impact fee moratorium

By [Charles Gonzalez](#)
News Chief staff

Published: Sunday, July 18, 2010 at 4:01 a.m.

BARTOW - A one-year moratorium on impact fees, which will affect bringing in new businesses or expansion of current businesses, will be voted on by County Commissioners during Wednesday's meeting.

The moratorium would affect almost all Polk County impact fees on new construction. The moratorium issue was discussed during a work session in June.

County commissioners Ed Smith and Sam Johnson said a temporary halt to impact fees is needed to create jobs, bring new business to the county and encourage expansion of existing businesses.

"We have a situation economically in Polk County that we have to deal with," Smith said during the work session. "I don't feel that it's the government's part to try and fix the economy, but it wasn't our government that put us in this situation."

Johnson said the moratorium can help more than it could hurt.

"A huge issue for me is the transformation of jobs in the county and the people who want to go back to work," Johnson said. "I think anything that we can do to remove a roadblock in the way of creating jobs and new businesses wanting to build here would be a positive."

Also during Wednesday's meeting, Doretha Brooks, director of the Small Business Development Center, will give details about a two-day small business forum, which is planned for August.

During an agenda review session, Brooks discussed holding the forum to try to bring in new small businesses, along with keeping existing small businesses.

Brooks will lead the forum, which will include guest speakers. There will be no cost to the county for the event, which will be held at the Jim Myles Center.

In a brief presentation to County Commissioners during the agenda review session, Brooks showed a proposed \$5,000 advertising and printing marketing plan to get the word out about the forum, which is scheduled to be held Aug. 23-24.

"There are so many small businesses around Polk County that are closing their stores and shops," Brooks said. "They don't have the resources or the marketing ideas so we can use this forum to help them turn things around."

charles.gonzalez@newschief.com

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