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County may eliminate port area's impact fees

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BRADENTON — Adopting a new “Jobs Now” theme, the Manatee County Commission will look at a proposal to eliminate impact fees for seven years on property developed near Port Manatee.

Carlos Beruff, president of Medallion Homes, suggested the moratorium on the fees Tuesday during a commission meeting.

The developer first referenced the benefits to the county economy when commissioners voted to reduce the transportation portion of the impact fees across the county.

“Because of your leadership on the impact fee reduction in April last year,” Beruff said, “Medallion Homes avoided laying off three employees and over the last six months hired four additional positions.”

He said that some business owners who deal with his company have reported to him that they retained 14 workers and hired an additional 59 full-time employees.

If all the companies that do business with Medallion Homes were surveyed, “we can safely say that the rest would get us well over 100” employees, Beruff said of the effect of reducing the transportation impact fees.

Because of the actions of the commissioners, he said fellow developer Pat Neal has generated or saved about 300 jobs in addition to the 100 from his company.

“Those jobs create \$15 million in annual payroll, and according to government statistics, that conservatively multiplies 1.75 times through our economy,” Beruff continued, “creating \$26.25 million in economic stimulus.”

The reduction in impact fees costs allowed developers to market homes at “a price point where we make a small profit and create momentum,” he said.

Beruff used these figures to push his proposal to eliminate all impact fees for the Port Encouragement Zone, a designated area around Port Manatee that offers incentives such as speedy plan approval and impact fee reductions to business to locate in the district.

He also suggested several other incentive actions, which the commissioners have already adopted or are studying.

County Administrator Ed Hunzeker said he would present all of the options and effects of eliminating the impact fees to commissioners at their work session Feb. 2.

Commissioner Gwen Brown said it was important for the commission to keep as its mission the need to create jobs now, not in 10-12 months as the federal and state government officials are proposing.

By formally adopting the “Jobs Now” theme, Brown said it puts the commission “in the mode to make things happen now and not in the long-term.

“People are concerned that sometimes if you move too fast you’ll make mistakes,” she said, “but the intent is not that we don’t dot every ‘i’ and cross every ‘t.’”

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