



County nixes impact fees

By Garrett Pelican, News-Leader

Due to an ailing economy, Nassau County Commissioners have voted to extend the suspension of impact fee collection by one year starting Jan. 1, and they have asked the school board and the city of Fernandina Beach to follow suit.

Impact fees are charged to developers and used to help pay for new growth. The commission first voted to suspend the fees in June 2008 in an effort to stimulate the local economy. The original moratorium was slated for six months, but the commission has continued to renew it since then given the slow economic recovery.

County Manager Ted Selby said last week that both the county Planning & Zoning Board and its Impact Fee & Concurrency Task Force recommended extending the suspension of fees for six months. The task force, he added, also urged the board to ask the same of the Nassau County School Board and Fernandina Beach.

Both those boards have continued to collect impact fees for new development that impacts their services.

Commissioner Stacy Johnson suggested suspending the fees for one year instead.

"I think a year's just a better timeline for us as well as an incentive for businesses right now that are coming to Nassau County," she said.

Commissioner Danny Leeper concurred, but clarified that the county is drafting a letter asking the school board and city to consider similar suspensions of fees.

"I don't want the public to think we're placing a moratorium on the school board impact fees or the city of Fernandina Beach," he said. "... This is only a request for them to consider placing a moratorium" on the collection of impact fees.

County Attorney David Hallman told commissioners that with reasonable notice to the public, the board could cancel the moratorium should it choose to move in another direction.

Leeper said the task force - an 11-member board charged with looking at new ways of structuring impact fees and concurrency - is trying to spur economic activity.

"I look at the major shopping center that's going in at Chester Road and A1A," he said. "The developer said that they didn't know if it would've gone in were it not for the absence of impact fees."

The committee meets at 4 p.m. the first and third Monday of each month at the James S. Page Governmental Complex in Yulee.

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