

DeLand reinstates impact fees for developers

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DELAND — At least some impact fees will be making a return starting Oct. 1, city commissioners decided at a meeting Monday.

Members of the City Commission unanimously directed city staff to let water and sewer impact fees return to their full amount effective Oct. 1. Water and sewer impact fees, charged to developers of new residential or commercial properties, had been cut 25 percent and 50 percent, respectively, by an ordinance adopted in September 2011.

The commission also unanimously directed staff to draft an ordinance to gradually phase in impact fees through October 2015 for police, general government building, fire, and parks and recreation, which were suspended entirely at the same time.

Commissioners were acting on a recommendation from Assistant City Manager Dale Arrington, who also serves as the city's community development director.

Developers Bob Fitzsimmons of Gallery Homes and Mark Bines of Kolter Homes, both of which build single-family homes in the city, spoke in favor of the measure.

Like most cities in Volusia County and the county government itself, DeLand adopted the impact fee reductions and moratorium in an effort to attract developers amid a severe slowdown of new building activity. However, the measures hurt the city's budget to the tune of more than \$768,000 in fiscal year 2011-12 between both categories of impact fees that were not collected.

At least on the residential side, the building situation in DeLand is much different than it was in 2011. In the first quarter of 2013, the city led Volusia County in new single-family home construction, with 59 permits pulled.

"It's been kind of a jagged line increase but a steady progression, if you drew a straight line through it, since enactment of our building permit fee moratorium," said Arrington.

The gradual phasing-in of the fees — which, when fully in effect, can add up to more than \$17,000 for each new single-family home — is being done in hopes of not dampening DeLand's nascent building boom. Currently, with the fee suspensions and reductions, developers pay about \$4,500 for each new single-family home in the city.

"I don't want to lose the fact that DeLand is hot, I guess is a way to say it," Mayor Bob Apgar said. "I'm happy with moving the way staff's done it, as long as we look to see how we compare to our sister cities in terms of activity a year from now."

Commissioners also unanimously approved a request from Stetson University's athletics department to allow tailgating activities around Spec Martin Stadium during the coming football season.

Jeff Altier, the university's director of athletics, explained that Stetson will designate seven parking lots around the stadium for tailgating. Tailgating parking permits will be issued for fans to park in these lots, with priority given to season ticket holders.

Would-be tailgaters will need to follow an extensive list of rules regarding everything from alcohol consumption to barbecuing, which will be enforced by Stetson's Public Safety department and DeLand police officers.

After talking through concerns about handicapped parking access in the lots — which, City Manager Michael Pleus pointed out must, by law, be free and open on a first-come-first-served basis — commissioners approved the request, marking another step in the march towards the university's first football season since 1956.

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