

Polk Commission Watch

Impact Fee Moratorium To Last Five Years

Friday, November 15, 2013 at 12:11 by Tom Palmer

If you have an opinion on impact fees, the County Commission is scheduling a public hearing at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday afternoon to once again consider extending the impact fee moratorium. This time it looks as though the moratorium won't expire until July 31, 2015, the fifth anniversary of the initial moratorium that began Aug. 1, 2010.

Moratorium were enacted in Polk and many other Florida counties in response to lobbying by the development industry, which has opposed impact fees since they were first imposed in Florida in the 1970s. The votes were based on the claim that it would help to stimulate the economy.

Data has been lacking to support that claim, but many county officials have gone along with the politically powerful development industry anyway.

There have been exceptions.

Officials in [Indian River County](#) rejected a moratorium this year after county officials told commissioners the simple truth. The money to deal with the impact of development has to come from somewhere. An impact fee moratorium will mean a tax increase down the line.

That's actually what happened in Polk County in a way. County impact fees were so minimal for so many years that the business community through its Polk Vision effort guided the discussion toward the discovery of an "infrastructure gap," and elected Bob English, who pushed the largest property tax increase in Polk County history to catch up.

According to the staff analysis accompanying the impact fee moratorium means Polk County is not receiving \$5.8 million a year for roads, parks and public safety, bringing the five-year total to a \$29 million infrastructure funding deficit .

In addition, the taxpayers are having to subsidize debt service on jail expansion costs in the absence of that impact fee.