

## Marco Island restaurants may be served up a savings on impact fees

By KELLY FARRELL

Friday, October 15, 2010

MARCO ISLAND — Marco Island restaurants seeking to move or expand may soon be served some financial relief with proposed decreases in utility impact fees. Marco Island City Council is to review an approximate 33 percent reduction in water and 50 percent reduction in sewer impact fees for restaurants at a meeting scheduled 5:30 p.m. Monday.

Among the concerns raised by council members at a workshop earlier this year was that some restaurants moving to a plaza would have large impact fees to pay and yet others would not owe any impact fees, said City Planner Kris Van Lengen.

"It's just understanding what the rules of the game are," Van Lengen said.

The utility impact fees run with the land, but he said another option being put on the table Monday is to allow impact fee credits to be transferred.

"They'd actually become a commodity," he said.

Currently, restaurants are charged impact fees based on a water usage of 40 gallons per day per seat. However, the average maximum daily water usage for restaurants averages about 27 gallons per seat, he said.

The proposal is to allow restaurants to pay based on the 27 gallon per day per seat usage and then after two years pay on the actual water used, Van Lengen said.

This change would also reduce the sewer portion of the impact fee by about 50 percent, he reported.

Another proposal is to allow new, moving or expanding restaurants to pay a lower application fee for an alternate calculation of their impact fees. Alternate calculations allow restaurant owners to provide evidence that they use less than the average restaurant. The current application fee is \$2,500 and the proposal is to reduce that to \$250.

Restaurants may also be given the option to pay their impact fees over the course of two years instead of the usual one-time fee.

Van Lengen said he didn't know where the need to review the fees came from initially and although several options are being presented to council, there aren't any particular changes being recommended by staff.

Joe Oliverio, president of the Marco Island Restaurant Association, said the recommendations aren't coming from the Association at this point either. Oliverio said he hadn't yet become familiar with the proposals to adjust water and wastewater impact fees.

Council discussions at a workshop scheduled to begin at 3 p.m. include:

- n Installing 60 new fire hydrants to ensure that all the residential properties on the Island are within 1000 feet of a working fire hydrant. The full fire hydrant installation project has been estimated to cost \$6 million.

- n Purchasing a fire pumper truck at a cost of about \$600,000 and hire three people to staff the truck at a cost of about \$208,000 annually.

Council is to consider the following at the meeting to begin 5:30 p.m.:

- n First reading of a fertilizer ordinance.

- n Decreasing the amount of time each year that vacant residential lots may be used to build seawall panels and for other construction staging.

- n The prospective of a mausoleum at Marco Island Cemetery.



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