

## Martin County committee takes hands-off stance on impact fees for auto dealer

By Jim Mayfield

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STUART — As a South Florida auto dealer attempts to establish a Stuart location and lobbies for a reduction in impact fees for the project, the Martin County Impact Review Committee on Wednesday said it would monitor the issue closely but let the process take its course.

The committee is charged with advising and making recommendations to the County Commission on the county's impact fee policy and submitting a report to commissioners when the county conducts a full review or update of the fee program.

"We want to watch it all the way through and understand the process," said Dave Satur, committee chairman.

However, Satur said the committee would not be in a position to make a recommendation to the commission on the issue.

In April, Mario Murgado, president and CEO of Miami-based Brickell Motors, received approval from Stuart to build a 60,000-square-foot Audi and Infiniti dealership between Advantage Ford and Lowe's on U.S. 1 in south Stuart. The 12-acre site has room to add another 30,000-square-foot dealership in the future.

Since that time, a slow boil over impact fees to be imposed on the project has been simmering.

Currently, the development calls for some \$700,000 in impact fees under an interlocal agreement between Stuart and Martin County to be imposed by the city. Approximately \$300,000 in additional fees stand to be collected if the third dealership is built.

Two camps have pitched around the issue: those who say the fees prevent development and job growth in a down economy and those who say they should be imposed to cover the impact of new development when governmental budgets are strained to the limit.

Though the auto company has indicated the high fees could be a deal-breaker, city officials say they are confident a solution can be found.

Furthermore, Samantha Horowitz, county principal planner and staff liaison to the committee, told committee members Wednesday the fee schedule has previously been a non-issue.

Johnson Honda, a 34,000-square-foot facility built just south of the proposed new dealership in 2009, was assessed \$384,000 in impact fees, so it is equitable that a dealership twice that size would face the fees being discussed, Horowitz said.

An alternative traffic study commissioned by Brickell Motors to support a request for discounted fees is expected for review by city staff sometime in July.



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