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Milford council introduces plan to extend impact fee moratorium

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Milford, Del. — The Issue

Starting in the summer of 2010, Milford's city government has stopped collecting utility impact fees — the money charged when someone attaches a new building to the city's sewer, water and electric systems. The fees exist to balance out the cost of making the connection and, over the long term, the cost of expanding the system when so many new customers sign that the city needs to install a new pipe or power line. By halting the fees, Milford is trying to encourage new construction inside city limits, which would bring in more tax revenue, add jobs and put more money into the local economy. Since June, the city has waived \$101,000 in new fees as \$5.7 million in new construction and additions to existing buildings have gone up — far more than Milford saw a year ago.

What Happened?

City Manager David Baird is now proposing that the impact fees stay gone until the summer of 2011. Right now they're scheduled to expire at the end of 2010, but at the last two city council meetings, he's said that there are still businesses and developers who want to use the fee waivers but haven't had enough time to build yet. Extending them through next June would give those longer projects time to take advantage of the program, Baird said; without an extension, that construction might never get off the ground, or go elsewhere.

What's Next?

Milford's city council has held short discussions on the extension at its last two meetings, both times without major objections to the idea. Ordinances have been officially introduced that would extend the deadline through June 30, 2011, so they could come up for a vote as soon as the council's next meeting. Expect either a vote or serious debate on the topic on Nov. 8.

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