

**NEWS > LOCAL****Moratorium yielding results**[Print Page](#)**By STEVE STEINER**
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Representatives from the construction and related industries are pleased.

Their message to Polk County Commissioners on Dec. 1 was heard loud and clear: The six month impact fee moratorium is not enough. Extend it at least 18 months to two years — preferably the latter. The extra time is necessary in order to get construction projects under way and completed, they said.

Bob Ziegenfuss, the director of civil engineering services with Interplan LLC, of Orlando, said the need for more time was crucial, primarily due to paperwork.

"That process takes three to four months," he said, adding that was just the beginning.

At the time he spoke, several days after commissioners approved the extension an additional 18 months, he said he would be attending a county staff level meeting the following week. That would be followed by two public hearings held a month apart each. In addition, his client — Krystals, a hamburger chain — needs waivers and variances. The county wants the building set back 35 feet from the road. His client wants a 32-foot setback.

"(You have) a minimum eight to nine months right there," he said.

That is before ground is even broken, he added. Once all the paperwork and hearings are dispensed with, assuming approval, there is the actual construction time itself, which Ziegenfuss said is at least another 90 days, on average. On top of that, once construction is completed, there are further inspections before the business can actually begin operations.

The impact fee moratorium was a factor in where to locate the restaurant, which is on the county side of Cypress Gardens Boulevard rather than on the Winter Haven side. As a result, a savings of approximately \$150,000 will be realized.

"That's a sizable amount of money," said Ziegenfuss. "It made a big difference when they ran their proforma, whether the restaurant will be profitable."

Ziegenfuss said the BOCC's decision to extend the impact fee moratorium to July 31, 2011, goes beyond Krystals. He said he will now certainly mention Polk County to current and potential clients.

Allea Newbold, the managing director with True Partners Consulting of Tampa, praised the BOCC for recognizing the need to prolong the impact fee moratorium. She said the vote was already yielding results.

"I have several clients looking at Polk County," she said.

That was good for Polk County, because prior to the vote, those clients had expressed concerns over the impact fees.

"We've been having discussions that the fees were too high, and that six months was not sufficient," said Newbold.

The Polk County fees, according to Commissioner Melony Bell prior to the vote and based upon a comparison she had conducted, were out of line with neighboring counties.

Newbold added she had clients who were now in the beginning stages of the permit process. Those clients, she said, were commercial, not industrial.

She also lauded the county commission for its foresight and being ahead of the curve.

"I think you'll see more and more counties come on board," she said.

One of those counties, however, might not be Ocala, which neighbors Polk County in the upper northeast corner of Polk at Poinciana, which straddles both counties.

According to Jeff Goldmacher — who is not in the construction or related industries, but instead is a founding member of the Committee for the Advancement of Poinciana, also known as CAP — Osceola County has an impact fee as high if not higher than Polk County. In addition, there is a concurrency fee for District 3 in Osceola County; much of District 3 includes Poinciana. Goldmacher termed this concurrency fee a second impact fee.

The lengthier impact fee moratorium Polk County commissioners approved is going to be a boon, he said. He called it a “first good step.” He firmly believes that the moratorium extension is going to attract businesses that offer good paying jobs to the Polk County side of Poinciana. In turn, that will attract people to move to Poinciana — also to the Polk County side — because it will offer an alternative to commuting to Orlando.

“This is something that is really going to help Polk County,” said Goldmacher. “I applaud the commissioners, I applaud their vote.”

Immediate results?

Whether there has been an uptick in the number of applications filed (referred to as “pulled”), no figures are available said Wanda Kendrick with the county building division.

This time of the year is slow when it comes to pulling permits, said Linda Stiles, a permit technician.

“We’ve moved nine single-family residences this month,” she said.

But, she said, “People are happy.”

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