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Port Orange OKs impact fee moratorium

By RAY WEISS, Staff Writer 

PORT ORANGE -- After much debate, city leaders agreed to a minimal impact fee moratorium on new residential construction for a year starting March 1.

The City Council voted Tuesday night to reduce the parks and recreation fee by \$250 and the fire impact fee by \$100, something Councilman Don Burnette and builders at the meeting predicted would make a "minor dent."

Like Volusia County and other cities, Burnette said residential construction needed to be stimulated, and urged deeper cuts that could be monitored after a year for their effectiveness.

But Mayor Allen Green, the lone opponent of the moratorium on the council, said cuts in revenue would "tweak" current amenities that could create an imbalance. He added that an unfair double standard would be created between residents who paid impact fees for services in the past would end up "subsidizing" new residents in the future.

"I don't care what the county has done and other cities have done," he said.

Councilman Dennis Kennedy added: "It's one of the few ways we have to have growth pay its way."

But Burnette said something needed to be done to help a suffering building industry, agreeing to do much less than he had hoped in reducing fees.

"I think doing nothing is the wrong thing," he said. "... We made a tiny dent."

City leaders said they would make similar cuts for commercial construction in the near future.

In other action Tuesday night, the council:

- Appointed City Councilman Bob Pohlmann vice mayor for 2012, replacing Dennis Kennedy in that position. Councilmen voted 4-1 with Bob Ford being the lone dissenter. Kennedy recommended Pohlmann and said he supported alternating the job annually like many other local cities.

- Heard from two players that Spruce Creek High School's junior varsity and varsity baseball teams will hold the first of several planned fundraisers this Saturday. A \$5-a-person pancake breakfast at Aunt Catfish's restaurant is set from 8 to 10 a.m. to upgrade the players' deteriorating batting cages. "The need is there," Green said. Call 386-679-6987 for more information.

- Honored 16 employees who retired in 2011 from the city. Several had 25 or more years of service, with Jan Parsons and Steve Wolf each being employed more than 30 years.

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