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Proposal would cut impact fees by \$4,289

By [MICHAEL D. BATES](#) | Hernando Today

Saying they need to do something to spark the economy, county commissioners on Tuesday proposed rolling back single-family impact fees to 2001 levels and giving homeowners an option to either pay them all upfront or set up a payment plan spread over an indeterminate time, possibly three to five years.

That would reduce total fees from the current \$9,137 to \$4,848. Commissioners called a public hearing for Nov. 10 to hash out the specifics of the payment plan and length of deferment.

County Commissioner David Russell, who proposed the idea, called it "a bold move" and should remove the crushing initial burden from homebuilders who now have no choice but to pay the entire fee when they apply for their permit.

Builders and businesspeople had lobbied for a one-year impact fee suspension for new single-family home construction, and a 50 percent cut the following year.

But Bob Eaton, owner of Artistic Homes and chairman of the Hernando Builders Association government affairs committee, said this compromise plan — if all the details are worked out — is a "move in the right direction."

"I think it has merit," Eaton said. "It shows concern, it shows compassion and may accomplish what we wanted."

Russell's plan piggybacks off an idea of Commissioner John Druzick, who earlier asked for some kind of deferral plan to remove the payment of fees from the front end.

Assistant County Attorney Jeff Kirk said rolling back rates to 2001 simply requires an ordinance change. However, he expressed concern about the payment plan and said he would have to research how the county could do so legally.

Russell said at least this opens the door to discussion.

Eaton said the plan is all about job creation. The average house building project employs about 50 workers, he said.

Eaton said he is insulted that some people think builders would not reduce the price of their homes if impact fees are suspended.

That won't happen, he said.

Realtor Gary Schraut agreed that builders need relief and that the county must be proactive.

"(Builders) don't need a handout," Schraut said. "They just need an opportunity to go back to work."

Currently, single-family homebuyers pay a one-time impact fee of about \$9,200, if they live in the Brooksville, Hernando County or Hernando Beach fire district. Spring Hill homebuyers pay \$9,137.

Those fees, which haven't changed since 2005, are divided into seven separate categories, with roads and schools taking the largest cut at \$3,627 and \$4,266, respectively.

The remaining fee money is distributed to law enforcement, parks, libraries, Spring Hill Fire (for residents of that district) and public buildings.

If the new fees are adopted, school rates would go down to \$2,406 and roads to \$1,845.