

## Local News

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### Public hearing for proposed impact fee waiver Feb. 28

By DREW WINCHESTER, [dwinchester@breezenewspapers.com](mailto:dwinchester@breezenewspapers.com)

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A public hearing date of Feb. 28 has been set for a proposed waiver of change of use impact fees on existing construction.

Assistant City Manager Carl Schwing said the move, if adopted, will be the first in a "series" of ordinances to be brought forth by the city's Economic Development Office in hopes of spurring some commercial growth.

"We want everyone to know the city is serious about economic development," he said.

The waiver would apply to change of use for restaurant, office, medical and retail facilities; new construction would not be eligible.

Councilmember Marty Mc-Clain, who sponsored the ordinance, said the move is worth a try, even if it doesn't yield results.

With the city still trying to find its way out of the economic downturn, McClain said he knows of two medical facilities that chose to move to Collier County instead of the Cape because Collier officials offered this same economic incentive.

"The purpose is to get people here, to get homes sold, to get people on the tax rolls," he added. "It's a kick start, an infusion, to get this locomotive back on track."

The city's EDO recently implemented a "customized financing" package to lure high-end, high-wage jobs to the city.

Councilmember Bill Deile wondered if the impact fee waiver countered that move, instead catering to retail and restaurant jobs, which historically don't offer high-wage, high-skill positions.

Schwing said the waiver of fees would bring Cape Coral in line with other cities in the county.

"There's a larger goal here than just targeted industries, admittedly," Schwing said.

The fewer impact fee dollars, the less funds that would be available for road improvement and construction projects.

Schwing said the city does not keep track of which impact fees are for new construction or for change of use, so it is difficult to discern how the waiver would exactly effect impact fees.

Schwing added there would be some danger of having to dip in the General Fund if the impact fee reduction became great enough, or if the program were successful enough.

As proposed, the waiver has a sunset date of Sept. 1, 2012, though City Council has the opportunity to adjust that time frame if needed.

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