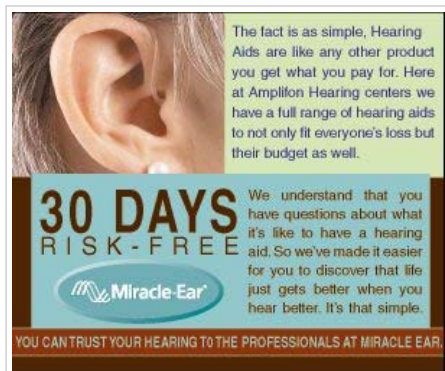


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Camden County to continue impact fee collections

Commissioners reverse course after suggesting halting them.

BY [GORDON JACKSON](#) | STORY UPDATED AT 3:56 AM ON THURSDAY, MAR. 18, 2010



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WOODBINE - Two weeks after openly supporting a proposal to suspend the collection of impact fees to stimulate new construction, the Camden County Commission has done a reversal.

At a work session this month, a majority of the commissioners said suspending the fees and returning all the money collected this year would help developers to start work on some projects. But when it came time to vote on the issue Tuesday night, the commissioners voted 3-2 to leave the impact fees in place.

Commissioner Steve Berry made the motion to leave the ordinance "just like it is," saying a vast majority of Camden County residents support impact fees. Residents would be upset if their taxes were raised to pay for roads, public safety and other services the impact fees would have funded, Berry said.

"I've said all along it's a crazy idea," he said.

Commissioners Charlene Sears and Katherine Zell agreed. But Commissioner Willis Keene Jr. and commission Chairman David Rainer voted against the motion, saying ending the fees - even temporarily - could help the local economy.

"Give it the opportunity to see if it works," Rainer said. "It doesn't hurt to try."

Keene suggested waiving the fee for the rest of the year, asserting it is a tax that residents cannot afford.

"It may be the incentive for them to build a house," he said.

During a public comment period, most residents who spoke said they supported the fee.

Jay Moreno of St. Marys said he is "categorically opposed" to ending the fees, adding the biggest hurdle to new home construction is the high down payment demanded by banks. The \$2,105 impact fee is "peanuts" that would have little impact on a monthly mortgage payment, he said.

"I don't think this is of any significance," he said.

Walt Natzic of St. Marys said the proposal to discontinue the fee "makes no sense at all."

"Leave it the way it is and quit fooling with something that works," he said.

But Randy Gunter Jr. of Kingsland disagreed, saying he supported ending the fee. Gunter said he is building his own house and had already paid the fee.

"In my world, \$2,000 is a lot of money," he said. "Any little money I could save, I could do a lot with that. I'm all for getting my money back."

Zell told Gunter she was sympathetic, but most people disagree with him.

"I do feel like you're victimized by this," she told Gunter. "But you are in a huge minority."

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