

## Council votes against development impact fee exemption

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*BARSTOW • Home builders came away from Monday's Barstow City Council meeting disappointed after the Council voted against extending the development impact fee exemption until Aug. 1, 2010.*

*When the development impact fees were put in place in May 2007, home developers who obtained building permits for projects shown on a tentative map approved by the city planning commission before Aug. 1, 2009 were exempt from paying development impact fees.*

*The Council voted 2 to 3 against extending the development impact fee exemption another year, allowing the exemption to expire Aug. 1. Councilmembers Julie Hackbarth-McIntyre and Timothy Silva voted in favor of extending the fee exemption. Councilmembers Willie Hailey and Tim Saenz, and Barstow Mayor Joe Gomez voted against extending it.*

*The Council also voted 4 to 1 to change the date impact fees would be imposed and paid from the issuance of a building permit to the final building inspection. Saenz dissented.*

*The Council's vote on the fee exemption comes after it tabled the issue at its July 6 meeting in order to find out how much development impact fees that had been collected to date. On Monday, Community Development Director Brent Morrow said \$17,845.39 in development impact fees have been collected to date. He said this includes the fees for two homes and Love's Travel Center.*

*At the July 6 meeting, Morrow said about 1,500 potential homes remain that are exempt from the fees, but he estimated that only 15 to 20 would have been built.*

*When the Council opened the matter to public comment Monday, Carlos Rodriguez, deputy executive officer with the Baldy View Chapter of the Building Industry Association of Southern California, encouraged Councilmembers to consider the context in which the development impact fee exemption was passed two years ago. In 2007, he said, the housing market was already experiencing a downturn with 47 permits issued in Barstow at that time. This year, as of June, zero building permits have been issued for Barstow, Rodriguez said.*

*"No one could have imagined the historic collapse in our economy," he said, adding that the*

*exemption was to allow a limited number of projects to move forward without having to pay an added \$4,500 in development impact fees. "Your decision tonight has everything to do with whether 15 to 20 projects this year will have an opportunity to provide jobs."*

*Rodriguez's colleague Jeff Simonetti, also with the Building Industry Association, said how well the economy does is related to how well the housing market and real estate and construction markets do.*

*"You hear the term retail follows rooftops," he said. "Without rooftops we won't see restaurants, we won't see hotels and we won't see new sales tax and property tax revenues."*

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