

[back to article](#)



Printed on page B1

**commissioners vote 4-1**

## **County Will Keep Impact Fees Halved**

By [Tom Palmer](#)

THE LEDGER

*Published: Sunday, July 26, 2009 at 12:01 a.m.*

BARTOW | Polk County commissioners have voted to continue to charge half the amount of impact fees for fire, police, jail, libraries, parks and ambulance service that a consultant recommended.

County commissioners acceded to pleas from the development community and voted, 4-1, in March to cut the fees in half. The commissioners again voted, 4-1, to keep those cuts on Wednesday, with Commissioner Jean Reed casting the dissenting vote both times.

Developers argued that cutting impact fees would aid in the recovery of the local homebuilding industry.

But during that initial vote, commissioners said they would re-examine the fees when an updated study was completed.

That study was presented Wednesday by Duncan Associates, one of the impact fee consultants the commission uses.

Scott Coulombe, executive director of the Polk County Builders Association, assured commissioners the previous impact fee cut had helped the local homebuilding industry.

He advocated charging only 50 percent of the full fees recommended in the

Duncan study.

Overall, the total for all six impact fees for a new home will remain at \$699. The recommended fees would have totaled \$1,399.

Some of the fees, such as library and parks, apply only to new residential development.

Reed said she was concerned the result would be either to shift the costs or to let infrastructure needs get further behind.

"It's a slippery slope," she said.

Commissioner Bob English asked about the fiscal impact of their decision on the budget for the 2009-10 fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1.

He was told the impact fee income was projected to be \$900,673 under the previous 50 percent rate.

Approving 100 percent of the fees in the Duncan study would bring in \$1.6 million. Approving 50 percent of the Duncan fees would produce \$807,805.

But Commissioner Ed Smith was persuaded by the builders' association's claim the fee cut had helped.

"If something is working, let it continue to work," he said.

[ Tom Palmer can be reached at 863-802-7535 or [tom.palmer@theledger.com](mailto:tom.palmer@theledger.com) ]

This story appeared in print on page B1

---

