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## **Impact Fee Rule Changes Get OK From Officials**

**By Tom Palmer**

The Ledger

BARTOW - Polk County commissioners agreed Thursday to changes in the county's impact fee ordinance that will offer subsidies to lure new factories and to make it easier for working-class residents to buy new homes.

The proposed changes, scheduled for a public hearing next month, are included in a 146-page document that replaces a collection of 26 county ordinances passed since 1989 that deal with impact fees in one way or another.

Some of the key revisions include:

Allowing annual indexing of impact fees to keep up with inflation, although with a provision to scrap indexing temporarily at the discretion of the County Commission.

Allowing commercial and industrial developers who owe impact fees of \$250,000 or more to pay the fees in installments spread out over as much as five years.

Reducing impact fees for economic development projects under certain conditions.

Changing the types of development that are exempt from impact fees.

Exempting "affordable" housing.

Exempting "granny flats," which are home additions intended to allow aged relatives to be cared for by family members when they can no longer live on their own.

There was some discussion Thursday about how to make up the lost impact fee revenue caused by the exemptions, which was estimated to be \$1.4 million for affordable housing and \$1.3 million for economic development.

"How do we make up \$1.4 million?" Commissioner Jean Reed asked.

The money will be made up from property taxes or other general fund revenues, she was told.

County Manager Mike Herr said he's concerned the fiscal impact might become too large.

"I don't want to get ourselves to the point of exempting a large number of houses, because

someone's going to be squawking when we can't afford programs," he said.

Commissioner Jack Myers said he'd like to go ahead.

"I'd like to try it and see how it shakes out," he said.

Herr said he would track the fiscal impact and let commissioners know what the effect is.

Commission Chairman Bob English said the economic development exemptions will fairly quickly bring an increase in property tax revenues.

Commissioners are scheduled to consider the revised impact fee ordinance during a public hearing at 1:30 p.m. May 9.

Assistant County Attorney Linda McKinley and Crystalyn Carey of Nabors Giblin & Nickerson, a Tallahassee law firm, revised the ordinance and presented the proposed changes to commissioners during a work session.

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