
'Smart' impact fees discussed

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SARASOTA COUNTY — Call it the “new normal.” Following the economic downturn, future growth in the county could come at an annual rate of only 1 1/2 to 2 percent. County commissioners are looking for creative ways to lower impact fees and make sure they know how that affects quality of service.

In January, county commissioners made outstanding permits and any new permits received prior to Feb. 1, 2013, eligible for a 50 percent road impact fee reduction if the associated certificate of occupancy is received prior to Feb. 1, 2014. The change was made in hopes of spurring the construction industry in Sarasota County and creating jobs. Commissioners also directed staff to investigate long-term alternatives to the county’s current practice of determining impact fees based on demand. They heard a “high-level, flyover of concepts” regarding transportation impact fee methodologies, as Deputy County Administrator Dave Bullock called it, Wednesday. **Factors affecting the use of transportation impact fees include the cost of roads, which spiked and are headed back down, during the past 15 years, causing “some stress for everyone,” said Steven Tindale, a transportation planner with the Tampa-based Tindale-Oliver, and Associates, Inc. Meanwhile, fewer state and federal transportation funds likely will be allocated to the county in the future. So balancing the issues of funds coming in versus costs, “the discussion clearly gets into your economic development objectives, your community objectives and the big fight is who pays, whether it’s 100 percent of the future people coming in or whether existing people can,” Tindale said.**

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