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Reported by Michael Lopardi

## Millsboro Growth Plan Waives Fees, Concerns First Responders

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The Millsboro Town Council has approved a plan to temporarily waive some fees on building permits to help spur growth. (Photo: WBOC)

**MILLSBORO, Del.** - The Millsboro Town Council has approved a plan to temporarily waive some fees on building permits to help spur growth, but some first responders said the move could cost them thousands of dollars.

The waiver applies to fire, ambulance and building component impact fees that are all tied to building permits for new construction, Town Manager Faye Lingo said. The council approved the measure Monday night, which went into effect Tuesday and will last for one year. Mayor Larry Gum said some builders approached the town indicating they would be more likely to build if the process was cheaper.

The fees are collected with the permit and passed on to first responders. Firefighters said the news could come at a worse time, noting they are already facing reduced funding from the state. Millsboro Volunteer Fire Company President Ron O'Neal said the company has other sources of funding but every penny counts in the struggling economy.

The town has seen the effects of the slumping economy. Figures from the town show building permit revenue dropped nearly 70 percent, or \$404,018 to \$124,712, from 2008 to 2009. In 2009, the fire and ambulance services each got roughly \$25,000 from the impact fees. The two fees are each one-quarter of one percent of the total construction project, the town said.

Lingo said the building component fee is placed into a separate account used to pay for infrastructure as the town grows. She said that figure does not affect the overall operating budget. Lingo also said the town will continue to collect a sewer and water impact fee and the price of permits is not changing.

Gum, who sits in an unusual position being both mayor and fire chief, did not cast a vote. He said the mayor only votes in tie-breaking decisions. Gum said he tries to remain neutral on such issues but has concerns about funding for the fire department.

Still, supporters said the town needs any possible revenue and the region could benefit from the jobs. Gum said fire and ambulance crews could just as easily receive less money if fewer building permits are purchased for the year.

The proposed Del Pointe Racino project is also on the minds of interested parties. If owners get the go-ahead and purchase their permits before the waiver expires, the company could lose out on a large source of funding.

O'Neal said the fire company appreciates the help of the town but cannot afford cutbacks when it is already facing reduced funding.



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