



Beaufort to collect school impact fees

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Beaufortonians soon may do several things they haven't done in awhile: dock their boat at Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park, buy a hot dog in Waterfront Park, eat a meal at a sidewalk cafe and pay a school impact fee.

The Beaufort City Council passed a resolution Tuesday to join Beaufort County and Port Royal in assessing fees on new developments, with the money dedicated to local school construction.

Developers will now be charged \$6,000 per home and \$2.50 per square foot of commercial space. They will receive a 75 percent credit toward the fee for affordable housing.

The fees, however, will be assessed only on new buildings for which the city and the developer have a development agreement. City manager Scott Dadson said developers are not required to have such agreements -- they would only do so if seeking a zoning change for a planned unit development.

The city already collects an \$81 per-home fee for county parks and a \$775 fee for county roads.

Beaufort might also collect fees from restaurants that serve customers on public sidewalks in front of their establishments. Sidewalk dining is not permitted in Beaufort, but the council preliminarily approved an ordinance Tuesday that would allow sidewalk cafes.

The issue was brought to the council this year after several customers at a downtown restaurant were ticketed for drinking alcohol outside. They had gone outside to smoke, in accordance with the city's new smoking ban.

The sidewalk cafe ordinance, which must be approved by the council once more to take effect, would allow sidewalk dining from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., but council members said they would consider extending those hours before voting again.

The council will also consider reducing the \$9-per-square-foot fee suggested in the proposed ordinance. Tommy Winburn, owner of Emily's Restaurant and Tapas Bar, told Beaufort Mayor George O'Kelley the fee would cost Emily's about \$1,000 a year.

Sidewalk cafe owners would be required to put down a \$500 deposit toward potential damages to city property.

Separately, Waterway Commission Chairman Steve Tully delivered the commission's recommendation Tuesday that a 200-foot day dock be built along the seawall of Waterfront Park, just south of the

pavilion. The commission voted Aug. 20 to recommend that location.

"If you want economic development in downtown Beaufort, you're throwing money away by putting it at (the existing day dock site)," Tully said. "From the perspective of the boater, (the seawall location) is more likely to bring them here."

He said the commission considered business development more heavily than aesthetics in making its decision because the council had specifically asked Tully's group to determine where a day dock would be an effective business generator. Tully added that groups opposed both proposed sites because the dock would obstruct views.

Henry C. Chambers, who served as Beaufort mayor while the park was being built, opposes a dock next to the park that bears his name.

"That view (from the park) is unobstructed, and I hope each (council member will vote) to keep the view unobstructed," he said Tuesday. "It's important to maintain the integrity of that park because it has turned the downtown around -- in 1971, half of the stores were boarded up."

American Cruise Lines also opposes a dock along the seawall because it could prevent cruise ships from mooring there. Tully said he thinks cruise ships could still dock along the seawall, but the council said it would not vote until surveys have been conducted to measure depths at various points along the wall and determine whether cruise ships could moor there.

Regardless of whether you boat or drive to the park, you will soon be able to buy a hot dog from a vendor just south of the pavilion, near the proposed site of the new dock. The city added that site to its sidewalk vending ordinance Tuesday, and Dogs on Wheels plans to begin serving food there soon.

The other two sites in Beaufort where sidewalk vending is permitted are at the intersection of Bay and West streets. The southwest side is currently reserved for snow cone vendor Sea Island Snow, and the southeast side is designated for flower sales.