



Beaufort, Port Royal consider fire impact fees for every new house

Published Tue, Sep 9, 2008 12:00 AM

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Beaufort and Port Royal want to implement impact fees for any new homes to pay for fire services to growing areas.

Beaufort Fire Department Chief Wendell Wilburn said that, based on growth, a new fire station will be needed within five years.

To get to that point, the Joint Municipal Planning Commission must adopt a fire facilities capital improvement plan, or an outline of how the money will be generated and spent. The commission in general approved the capital improvement plans as presented by each municipality at its Tuesday workshop.

The proposed plan provides that each municipality would use impact fees to generate \$1.7 million per municipality for new shared facility and services. Each municipality would contribute \$900,000 for a fire station with equipment, \$550,000 for a truck with equipment and \$250,000 to purchase land. The location of the building has not been decided, said Wilburn.

Currently, some planned unit developments are charged impact fees to cover the cost of fire services. The new proposal would apply to every new house.

Under the proposal, the impact fees per homewould differ by municipality because they would be based on growth rates over the next 20 years. Beaufort is expected to add 1,500 families and Port Royal 1,300 families, said Port Royal Town Planner Linda Bridges. Affordable housing would be exempt from the impact fees.

However, the commission members said having different fees depending on whether a home was built in Beaufort or Port Royal could raise concerns by residents.

"Why, for the same facilities, would we have different fees?" asked member Jim Crower. "Why should the location matter?"

Joe DeVito, commission chairman, said that the impact fees are not proportional, but they are equal. DeVito said, for example, Port Royal's impact fee per household might be more to cover the town's share because it is based on fewer people. The commission asked the fire department and municipal planners to look into the possibility of basing the fees on combined growth estimates.

The commission will vote on the capital improvement plan at its Oct. 6 meeting and then each council would have to adopt the impact fees.