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Golden Palms Hotel gets break from City Council

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The Ocala City Council is waiving the 20 percent down payment of the impact fee that the Golden Palms Hotel must pay to hook up to the city sewer system.

The council took this action Tuesday night despite discovering the hotel owner has not paid 2009 property taxes and had three judgments, totaling \$8,600, against the business.

The hotel, located at 3767 N.W. Blitchton Road (U.S. 27), was left without sewage service after a nearby Krystal restaurant, whose private sewage plant the hotel was using, closed. The hotel has paid the city to connect to the city sewage system and has been using a private sewer service until then.

Assistant City Attorney Jimmy Gooding, who presented the report, explained that the city would have to finance \$144,795, which is 100 percent of the impact fee. Normally, a 20 percent down payment would be covered by the owner.

But this was a unique situation that posed minimal risk to the city, Gooding said. Even if the business were to go under, it would stop using the city's sewage services and the next holder would have to pay the rest of the payment anyway.

"We're fairly safe in this situation," said City Manager Ricky Horst. "But we should not set precedence."

Council members voted 3-2 in favor of waiving the down payment.

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