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County Council supports efforts for sewer system

Tax break, streetscape money also OK'd

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Georgetown County Council supported efforts for a public sewage system in Annie Village, approved a tax break for a new business and heard from residents opposed to new impact fees, among other business at its meeting Tuesday night.

The Annie Village resolution, which passed with no opposition, came after a meeting in which officials explained the project costs and the community development block grant being sought to help install the system.

Residents of Annie Village are in support of getting the system installed, said Georgetown County Council Chairman Johnny Morant.

"The residents want the system replaced," Morant said.

Sarah Smith, community development director for the Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments, told residents Monday night that the \$500,000 grant will help pay for the system and help with any costs residents cannot absorb.

There will be a discount rate for installation while the project is ongoing, she said. Some costs of installing pipes to connect homes to the system also will be covered by the grant, if the homeowners meet economic guidelines.

The grant application is due by Monday, Smith said. Representatives of the Coastal Conservation League said they have concerns about the sewage project because smaller communities are often swallowed by development after a public sewer system is added.

Georgetown County Council also approved Tuesday an agreement to offer a tax break to Renewed World Energies, a business planning a move to Georgetown County.

Renewed World Energies, which plans to invest at least \$29.3 million in Georgetown, is being offered a locked millage rate for 20 years, according to the Georgetown County Council.

The company, which plans to turn algae into biodiesel, expects to create at least 60 jobs in Georgetown County.

Council members also approved a budget amendment to take at least \$600,000 from the county's reserve fund to finish this year as it faces a budget deficit.

There have been no layoffs of county employees this year.

Residents used the meeting to ask the county to delay impact fees that are supposed to come into effect June 1. The impact fees have been opposed by builders and residents, who say they will drive prospective home builders and new businesses to other counties.

The county has had few building permits requested this year, said Mark Pender, who spoke against the fees during the public comment section of the meeting.

"Are we holding people down by holding the American dream from them?" Pender said.

The council also approved \$35,000 for streetscape improvement in Murrells Inlet.

The Murrells Inlet 2020 group wants to place utilities underground and improve parking conditions on U.S. 17 Business, said County Administrator Sel Hemingway.

The group wants to use a portion of the Sunday liquor sales permit revenue to jump-start the program, Hemingway said.

Other money for the project would be raised from private donations, he said.

Portions of the Sunday sales money were used to construct the Murrells Inlet Marshwalk.

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