

FrederickNewsPost.com

High-impact fee

Originally published October 19, 2011

By ed

Renowned chef Bryan Voltaggio and his business partner, Hilda Staples, are interested in opening a second eatery on North Market Street in Frederick. Their Volt restaurant has been a smashing success, garnering regional recognition and attracting diners willing to travel some distance to enjoy Volt's cuisine and ambience.

The property they were interested in is the long-empty Carmack-Jay's grocery location in the 300 block of North Market. The building is an attractive, modern structure whose neighbors, as well as the city, had high hopes would find permanent tenants and be the catalyst for the revitalization of the North Market Street corridor. It's been sitting there, vacant and forlorn, for years.

But the city's estimate on the water/sewer impact fees for a new restaurant at that location -- \$205,000 -- has thrown water all over the restaurateurs' plans.

It would make sense all around if this property were hosting a successful business -- no one can argue with that. It's also obvious that the city needs to have a standard impact-fee structure for water/sewer users and obviously needs to collect the fees, which fund water and sewer development in the city.

The suggestion has been made that instead of requiring that these hefty fees be paid upfront and in full, that they be paid in increments over a number of years. This would make new business ventures such as the proposed restaurant -- already a daunting financial challenge -- more feasible.

The city is at work on some new way to handle impact fees. The goal will be to help new businesses get off the ground while still meeting the city's funding needs for water/sewer projects.

It's likely that no solution they create will be problem-free or universally embraced, but if they can come up with a creative new plan that will help -- as opposed to discourage -- new city business starts, it will be to everyone's advantage.

While the mayor and aldermen are mulling that over, it would be nice and make all kinds of sense if some interim plan could be implemented that would facilitate the opening of a new restaurant on North Market Street.

After learning about the \$205,000 fee, Staples and Voltaggio began considering venues in Chevy Chase and in Washington. All we can say is, if it's more economically practical to open a new restaurant in tony, upscale Chevy Chase or Washington than to open it in Frederick, something's wrong in Frederick.

Please send comments to [webmaster](#) or contact us at 301-662-1177.

Copyright 1997-11 Randall Family, LLC. All rights reserved. Do not duplicate or redistribute in any form. The Frederick News-Post [Privacy Policy](#). Use of this site indicates your agreement to our [Terms of Service](#).