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Impact fee promising, but store vote is not

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Tuesday's Gazette offered ample reason for awarding "barbs and bouquets."

First a "bouquet" for Sen. Tom Davis and Rep. Shannon Erickson, who spoke simple truth to a large, well-organized and motivated meeting to discuss impact fees for school infrastructure costs generated by new development.

Undeniably, new development generates unfunded new school construction costs, which fall on the shoulders of existing residents and businesses. Davis and Erickson recognize the need for a well-crafted additional tool (impact fees) to better allocate these costs to new residents, who by their arrival are generating these major expenses.

Conversely a "barb" for Beaufort County Council, which set a negative precedent in compromising the "public market district" on St. Helena Island by permitting an oversized Family Dollar store.

Businesses already in the "district" that have played by the rules as to size and character have been upstaged. Who will be foolish enough to take seriously the guidelines of a "Community Preservation District" in the future if everything's negotiable?

The major shopping center at the intersection of U.S. 21 and S.C. 802 (less than 5 miles and 6 minutes down the road) has been outflanked by the council's awarding logistical commercial advantage to this store.

Vacant storefronts in local shopping centers could accommodate the Family Dollar, but County Council has set the theme for the "S" word -- sprawl.

Kudos to Council representatives Paul Sommerville, Laura von Harten and Steve Baer, who had the vision to see the negative implications of this unwise proposal.

George Johnston

Dataw island

Bring sense of urgency

to Jasper port proposal

The Gazette reported Feb. 7 that

Jasper Ocean Terminal engineering consultants are projected to take as long as 15 years to complete the environmental and economic studies and develop an acceptable working plan for the port.

Wow. This is totally unacceptable.

Having worked as chief engineer and planner for the largest developer in New Jersey for several decades (one of the most permit-laced bureaucratic states in the country), I can say with some authority, as state Sen. Tom

Davis said in the same article, "2024 is

ridiculous."

Any developer in the private sector would, under threat of firing the consultant, renegotiate the consulting contract to provide specific permitting and environmental study timetables, certainly far shorter than the 15-year prediction. If they can't comply, hire a new consultant; there's simply too much at stake.

If the consultant remains on a 15-year schedule, it is not only an open checkbook for continuing consulting fees and extras, but over a 15-year period the regulatory agencies controlling the rules and regulations only will get tougher and more restrictive, causing even more delays and more costs.

The project needs a strong leader, not in the form of consultants, to establish an aggressive program.

The ports authorities should set timetables and be more aggressive to make this port a reality and not a bureaucratic boondoggle.

Michael B. McNally

Callawassie Island