

# Port Royal council delays action on proposed fire impact fees

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The Port Royal Town Council put off a second reading Wednesday of a proposed fire facilities development impact fee, opting to review the ordinance with officials from the city of Beaufort before passing it into law.

Under the proposed plan, both Beaufort and Port Royal would collect fire impact fees from developers building new residential, commercial and mixed-use properties. Affordable housing developments would be exempt.

The revenue would be used to fund a new shared fire facility and increased fire protection.

The Beaufort City Council passed the first reading of the fire impact fee ordinance at its Tuesday meeting, even though many council members were worried about placing an extra financial burden on developers and raising the price of local real estate.

Council members from Port Royal and Beaufort will meet Jan. 12 to discuss the fire impact fee ordinance and other issues.

Jeff Pinckney, a local developer currently constructing a 94-unit, mixed-use property on 19th Street in Port Royal, spoke against the fire impact fee at the public hearing held before the start of Wednesday's council meeting.

Pinckney said he is already paying \$170,000 in fees and permits alone to build the 19th Street development, and his property taxes have risen from \$1,800 to \$8,000 in the past year.

When the development is completed, it will generate as much as \$150,000 in tax revenues for the town each year, he said.

"We should promote having less fees, not more," he said.

The council also passed a motion Wednesday to accept a bid from Beaufort-based O'Quinn Marine Construction, Inc. to repair the top deck of the observation tower at The Sands.

O'Quinn bid \$54,354 to complete the project, Town Manager Van Willis said. That was significantly lower than the more than \$130,000 bid the town also received.

The top deck of the tower has been closed since August.

It will take the company about 60 days to make the parts needed to repair the tower and get them in place, Willis said.