

# Barnwell: One of many cities pumping up the state's economy

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It's an announcement Barnwell City Council — and cities and towns across South Carolina — hope the state legislature hears loud and clear.

At a Feb. 4 City Council meeting, members approved a proclamation declaring February "Cities Mean Business" month.

"Cities Mean Business" is a statewide month-long effort by the Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) to highlight the importance of municipalities to the state's economic development, said Barnwell City Administrator John Zawacki.

The campaign is aiming to encourage stronger mutual collaborations between local elected leaders and business community members across the state.

"It's about the importance of businesses to a city — it's more than just going

out and buying a pizza," said Zawacki.

Seventeen new businesses opened in Barnwell in 2007, said Lynn Cox, the Barnwell County director for tourism and community development services.

This did not include the transient businesses in construction and development, said Lynn Cox, she said,

Cox and Zawacki will be holding breakfast meetings with city business leaders during February in which presentations will be made, said Zawacki.

The meetings focus on the city's role in helping businesses thrive with subjects like water and sewer capacity, upkeep of fire and other civil services and recreational opportunities.

"The presentations show what the city is trying to do for business," said Cox.

On Feb. 20, Zawacki heads to Columbia to meet with state legislators for "Hometown, S.C. Legisla-

tive Action Day."

Zawacki, along with other state city and town leaders will promote the value of cities to the S.C. economy and discuss how proposed legislation may support or hamper business growth in municipalities.

Keeping the spotlight shining on the streets of Barnwell, Cox and the Council will recognize businesses within Barnwell city limits that have been operating for 50 and 75-plus years Feb. 26 at the Barnwell County Library 6:30 p.m.

If any businesses are interested in being honored, contact Lynn Cox (803) 541-6555 for criteria.

In other business, the Council:

- Passed a request to begin bids for new lighting at the Fuller Park basketball courts.

Funds for the lighting, as well as construction of new restrooms, new court fencing, and landscaping and irrigation for Fuller Park are from a \$50,000 Park and

Recreation Development (PARD) state grant. The city is putting \$12,500 toward the \$62,500 project.

- Approved a request to change the sick day policy for city employees. Previously, city employees were not allowed to take sick time for an illness in the family. Now, employees can use five sick days for family illness.

- Passed first reading of an ordinance to amend business license laws.

The amendment will allow the city administrator to issue interim licenses to certain types of businesses during holiday seasons before council gives final approval of a license.

- Passed first reading of an ordinance that will allow septic waste from unincorporated areas in Barnwell County to be treated at the Barnwell wastewater treatment plant.

- Approved a request asking the Barnwell County Council for \$200,000

from the economic development fund to go toward upgrades for the Milliken raw water system upgrades.

- Appointed Bennie Wiggins to the Planning Commission. Wiggins was sponsored by Councilman Ben Duncan.

- Lynn Cox reported she submitted three applications for budget and control competitive community state grants.

The grant application requests \$250,000 to be used for the Lemon Park Sports Complex; \$75,000 for repairs to the fountain on the Circle; and \$100,000 toward the Milliken upgrades.

- Approved a request to send a letter to Barnwell County Administrator Pickens Williams Jr. asking for an increase in county funds for the the Lemon Park Sports Complex.

According to the letter, the city gets \$8,500 a year from the county toward recreation.

However, since 60 percent of the city's recreation pro-

grams are used by out-of-city residents, the Council is asking for additional funds, stated the letter.

The current recreation budget is \$71,000 for programs — which doesn't include employee salaries or benefits.

The city is requesting 60 percent — \$42,600 of the \$71,000 — be covered by the county in fiscal years 2009-10 and 2010-11 as well as \$10,000 in fiscal year 2008-09.

- Approved a request for an artist rendering — not to exceed \$2,500 — for Lemon Park Sports Complex.

- Read a letter from F.H. Dicks III which requested a smoking ban for public restaurants and buildings be placed on the Council's agenda.

Council members felt a smoking ban should be left to the discretion of the individual owners of restaurants and establishments in Barnwell.