



# NEWS RELEASE

**For immediate release**

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## **Beaufort buys land for new fire station, groundbreaking expected in February**

Groundbreaking for a new Beaufort fire station on Ribaut Road is expected in February with the anticipated completion in Fall 2014 after Beaufort city leaders purchased the 1.2-acre site late last month.

The location, at 1120 Ribaut Road, is ideally situated for fire protection and is geographically positioned between Port Royal's main station and Beaufort's Fire Headquarters near the intersection of Ribaut and Boundary Street, Fire Chief Sammy Negron said.

"We couldn't be happier to see this project moving forward," he said. "It will mean a lot to our ability to serve not only the City of Beaufort but also the Town of Port Royal with continued excellence and lower fire insurance rates."

Design work on the facility had continued through the summer, even as the city examined other potential sites for the fire station. The new facility will replace the outdated one beside Beaufort Middle School and across from Mossy Oaks Elementary on Mossy Oaks Road.

"This is the right piece of property for the new fire station. It meets our needs now and into the future as we continue to improve our service capabilities," Beaufort City Manager Scott Dadson said.

Beaufort City Council on May 28 authorized contract negotiations for the 1120 Ribaut Road site. The location offers:

- Direct access to the main artery between Beaufort and Port Royal
- Easy and efficient travel times to the entire coverage area for this fire station

- Excellent geographical positioning to reinforce and enhance the ISO 2 rating that helps reduce commercial fire insurance premiums
- Limited impact on neighborhoods
- Greater distance from large schools than the current Mossy Oaks station
- Smooth traffic flow for fire vehicles, including direct access to the rear of the facility (eliminating fire trucks having to back into the bays).

As part of its due diligence in early summer, the City commissioned a geo-technical study of the site to determine soil conditions, drainage and other concerns.

The report confirmed the City's expectation of having to deal with new regulations for earthquake conditions – but also indicated the need to dig up the existing soil to a depth of five feet, truck it away, and replace it with better soil to bring the property level with Ribaut Road. That new soil will need to be compacted prior to any construction. That process adds approximately \$70,000 to the overall project cost, Dadson said.

Since May 28, the Savannah architectural firm Hussey Gay Bell & DeYoung has been designing the new fire station for the Ribaut Road property. The idea was to have designs ready when the City closed on the property, enabling construction to start sooner.

The current Fire Station on Mossy Oaks Road is outdated and has several major maintenance issues including roofing. That facility will remain operational until the new fire station is complete. City leaders continue to discuss options for the Mossy Oaks Road fire station site.

After reviewing several other properties for the fire station project from July through early September, City leaders decided to stick with the best-suited property at 1120 Ribaut Road. The City bought the property in late September for \$320,000 from Andrew Sears and Macie Sears Scherick of Jacksonville, Fla.

The entire fire station project, including site acquisition, design, construction and fixtures/furnishings, is financed through \$2.2 million remaining in City bond sales.

The current schedule calls for site and facility design to be complete by December, groundbreaking in February 2014, soil removal and replacement/site work done in early spring and the new Beaufort Fire Station open for use in the Fall of 2014.

“We are excited about the new fire station and how it will help us in our mission to provide the best possible fire prevention and fire protection services to the people of Beaufort and Port Royal,” Negron said.

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