



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Monday, Dec. 15, 2014

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Beaufort proposes beautification program that calls on residents to help mow, maintain public rights of way

With the goal of improving Beaufort's landscaped appearance while saving money, a proposed ordinance amendment asks city residents to mow and maintain public rights of way within the city limits.

The proposal states "it is reasonably the responsibility of owners or occupants to maintain their property up to the street line," including any public right-of-way.

"Beaufort already is known for its beauty, and we have the national magazine awards and local pride to show for that," Beaufort City Manager Scott Dadson said. "What we are trying to do with this (proposed amendment) is find ways to keep our street rights of way even cleaner and more attractive."

Within the Beaufort city limits there are about 194 miles of roads, including all the annexed areas and military installations. This includes roads created by developers, federal, state, county, and city governments inside the city limits.

Of those 194 miles of roads, only 11 miles – about five percent – formally belong to the city, said Isiah Smalls, Beaufort's director of public works and facilities management.

"What we are looking for is a way to make our city more visually appealing by asking our residents to help out with mowing the grass on public rights of way," Smalls said. "This amendment doesn't require additional landscaping or any special skills beyond using a lawn mower once in awhile. The potential savings to our city budget are pretty substantial."

Under the current schedule, city crews or contractors mow every street in Beaufort four times annually. Gateways to the city and major thoroughfares – such as Boundary Street, SC 170 and Ribaut Road -- are mowed weekly.

The ordinance amendment could eliminate or at least reduce the need to maintain the residential street landscaping, saving the city approximately \$108,000 per year, Smalls said. If the ordinance was expanded to all commercial properties along major thoroughfares and gateways, it could possibly save an additional \$150,000.

That combined \$258,000 in potential savings is more than one-third of Beaufort's total annual budget for streets, Smalls said.

If approved by Beaufort City Council, the amended ordinance would give a five-day grace period after a resident is notified of violating the rule – after that time, fines would be enforced.

“Many residents of Beaufort already take care of the rights of way to the street line of their properties,” Smalls said. “This change really talks to the property owners who don't maintain the area between their property line and the edge of the pavement. We want to achieve a manicured appearance on every city street, as much as possible.”

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