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Why is Beaufort County imposing this fee?

Based on our understanding, Beaufort County is attempting to collect additional revenue to cover the cost of operations for the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) on Hilton Head Island. As part of their annual property taxes, Hilton Head Island businesses and residents already pay for the services the BCSO provides on the Island. For Fiscal Year 2021, this would create a surplus of revenue for Beaufort County's budget.

What is the Beaufort County Law Enforcement Service Charge and Uniform User Fee?

Beaufort County retained TischlerBise, a Maryland-based fiscal, economic and planning consulting firm, to develop a methodology for a Law Enforcement Service Charge and Uniform User Fee to be implemented in the Town of Hilton Head Island. This is a fee Beaufort County plans to apply only to the taxes of Hilton Head Island property owners.

How will the fee be calculated?

The Law Enforcement Service Charge and Uniform User Fee District is calculated to allocate costs to different types of land uses. There is no direct relationship between this fee and the level of law enforcement that is provided on Hilton Head Island as compared to the rest of Beaufort County.

How will my taxes be affected?

According to the TischlerBise study, the fee will be assessed based on the type of residential and non-residential uses. Property owners may have between \$88 and \$101 added to their tax bill, depending on the type of residence they own. Businesses may be assessed anywhere from \$69 to \$242 depending on the square footage of the property. You may see this charge on your next tax bill, but we are fighting to stop Beaufort County from collecting this charge.

What services does the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office provide for Hilton Head Island?

The Beaufort County Sheriff's Office provides a range of law enforcement services for Hilton Head Island. It has done so since prior to and after the Town's incorporation in 1983.

How much money do Hilton Head Island residents pay for Sheriff Department services?

In Fiscal Year 2020, Hilton Head Island property owners paid \$14.4 million in property taxes for law enforcement, accounting for 45 percent of the Sheriff's Office \$32 million operating budget. The Beaufort County Law Enforcement Service Charge and Uniform User Fee would generate \$4.4 million more in revenue, increasing taxpayer contribution to \$18.8 million or 60 percent of the Sheriff's Office operating budget.

Will this fee be imposed upon other municipalities in Beaufort County?

No. Beaufort County retained TischlerBise specifically to develop a methodology for a Law Enforcement Service Charge and Uniform User Fee to be implemented in the Town of Hilton Head Island. According to the study TischlerBise prepared in July, the Law Enforcement Service Charge and Uniform User Fee would cover the cost for law enforcement services the BCSO provides to the Town of Hilton Head Island.

What is the Town doing about this fee?

On August 31, Hilton Head Island Town Council authorized the Town Manager and his staff "to take all necessary action to protect the interests of the citizens of Hilton Head Island with regards to imposition of the County's Uniform Law Enforcement Service Charge." Since that time, the Town has filed an injunction with the South Carolina Supreme Court requesting that it prevent Beaufort County from adding this law enforcement fee to the tax bill of Hilton Head Island residents. We will continue discussing the matter with County leaders. If we do not reach a timely resolution, we will file a lawsuit.

Why is an injunction and lawsuit necessary?

Town leaders feel this fee is illegal and unconscionable. As such, we are taking legal action to block implementation and collection of this new service charge to protect Island residents from having to pay it. The injunction will prevent Beaufort County from collecting this fee during the next tax collection cycle, for which bills will be sent in November. The lawsuit seeks to have the court declare the County's ordinance as illegal and repeal it.

What can Hilton Head Island residents do about this fee?

Hilton Head Island citizens may express their concerns about having to pay this fee by calling or sending a message to the Beaufort County Administrator (843-255-2026) and the Beaufort County Council (843-255-2180). Visit beaufortcountysc.gov and click on the "Contact" tab at the top of the page. In the contact menu, which appears at the bottom of the page, select Citizengram. On this form, choose to send a message to the County Administrator and/or County Council.

Why doesn't the Town have its own police department like other municipalities?

When the Town was incorporated in 1983, Town leaders opted not to have a separate police force. Prior to the time, the BCSO served the Island and continued to do so after incorporation. The question of Hilton Head Island having its own police force has been raised several times. In 2000, the Town had a study conducted on the feasibility of having its own police department. That analysis, at that time, indicated the Town would have had to spend \$12 million in start-up operational costs to establish its own police force and \$4.5 million for ongoing operations. The cost of these services today would be substantially more.