



CITY OF MYRTLE BEACH
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

April 10, 2019

Johnny Gardner, Chairman
Horry County Council
P. O. Box 1236
Conway, SC 29528

Dear Chairman Gardner:

Thank you for your letter of April 3. As you are aware, the Myrtle Beach City Council has expressed its willingness to commit support for the I-73 project. However, since the proposed funding source is the subject of litigation, we are unable to engage in negotiations under the terms described in your letter and related attachments.

As you are aware from the lawsuit the City of Myrtle Beach has instituted against the County, it is our position that the continued collection of the Hospitality Fee inside the City's corporate boundary is not lawful. Given that position, we do not see how that fee can be considered as the basis for a compromise or agreement among the parties in dispute.

The Myrtle Beach City Council is required to manage the City's business affairs for the benefit of its constituents. Accordingly, we cannot delegate to the County the authority to control the disposition of revenues which are properly within the City's authority to receive and the City Council's authority to manage. Our belief is that each jurisdiction is best suited to determine the use of its own revenues.

In addition, the County's proposal is both unfair to our constituents and legally questionable. City residents and businesses already pay property taxes for County Police and Fire Departments which largely serve the unincorporated areas. The County's proposal essentially double tax city residents by collecting a service fee within our jurisdiction to pay for services that city property owners already support through their taxes. Even if the fee were legal, we see no benefit to our constituents from that arrangement.

As expressed publicly, the City of Myrtle Beach is willing to engage in discussions, but as prudent elected officials, we again decline to discuss issues that are under active litigation without such discussions being conducted as settlement discussions under Rule 408 of the South Carolina Rules of Evidence.

The City of Myrtle Beach is committed to the collection and proper use of valid, statutorily authorized taxes. The City also has expressed interest in supporting funding for I-73. However, for the reasons cited here, City Council declines to consider the proposal outlined in your letter. Our door remains open to discussions consistent with the elements of negotiation outlined above.

Sincerely,



Brenda Bethune
Mayor

cc: City of Myrtle Beach Councilmembers
Horry County Councilmembers
Mayor Marilyn Hatley, North Myrtle Beach
Mayor Barbara Blaine Bellamy, City of Conway
Mayor Bob Childs, Town of Surfside Beach
Mayor John Gardner, Town of Aynor
Mayor Pro Tempore Todd Harrelson, City of Loris
Mayor Jake Evans, Town of Atlantic Beach