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Commissioners express opposition to toll proposal

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The likelihood of a toll to St. Simons Island is unlikely based on comments from a majority of Glynn County commissioners attending a town hall meeting Thursday.

The meeting was called to discuss a planned Special Local Option Sales Tax referendum in November, but the proposed toll generated strong response by commissioners.

The question was posed after Commissioners Wayne Neal, Walter Rafolski, Sammy Tostensen, David O'Quinn and Bill Brunson voiced opposition to the proposed toll. They were asked why discussions have continued about a toll if there is no support among a majority of commissioners.



“The toll will be dropped,” Rafolski said. “I just don’t see it.”

Brunson defended Commissioner Cap Fendig, who has been meeting with state officials to see if a toll is even possible for the county to impose.

“He just wants the information,” Brunson said. “Right now, all of us are just guessing (if a toll is possible).”

Brunson said there may be a better way to generate revenue to help deal with traffic and density issues on St. Simons Island, including parking meters.

Brunson said voter approval of a SPLOST referendum this fall is important. One of the main proposed projects is a courthouse annex, which would force an increase in property taxes without the 1-cent tax.

“SPLOST is the best way,” he said.



The meeting, held at the Holiday Inn, attracted about 100 people.

Neal, who hosted the meeting to hear the wants, needs and concerns of his District 3 constituents, listened to comments about drainage, sidewalks, road improvements and traffic control in some areas.

One woman expressed concerns about a large service station planned off Interstate 95 at Exit 42. The station will include a 73,000-square-foot store that will generate a lot of traffic at the interchange.

“Exit 42 is a gateway to the Golden Isles and it will bring a lot of opportunity for us,” Neal said. “There are a lot of studies being done.”

Rachel Thompson with Glynn Environmental Coalition urged commissioners to hire a new county manager before a SPLOST referendum goes before voters.

“If you don’t have a county manager by November, a SPLOST won’t succeed,” she said.

She suggested a joint town hall meeting with officials from Brunswick and the Brunswick-Glynn Joint Water and Sewer Commission since they will be recipients of SPLOST revenue if voters approve the referendum.

Neal said all the commissioners plan to hold more town hall meetings to discuss possible projects to include for a SPLOST referendum. He said county taxpayers are losing \$30 million in revenue with more than half of it generated by people living outside of Glynn County. He said Glynn is one of five counties in the state without a SPLOST.

“That’s a lot of revenue,” Neal said. “That revenue helps keep our property taxes low.”



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