Pickens looks at incentives to lure businesses

Business license fees may change

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PICKENS — City officials here may create incentives and amend business license fees to help attract and keep businesses.

A City Council committee discussed business incentive measures that would waive or reduce fees on municipal services, such as water, sewer and commercial garbage pickup, as well as business license costs for a year.

"It's a couple thousand dollars to the city, but in the years that they're going to pay — if you can get someone to come in and buy a building or just hospitality tax from restaurants — it pays back the city tenfold," City Administrator Katherine Brackett said.

Councilman Fletcher Perry said the city should be able to give an incentive, such as waiving a business license cost for the next year, if a business does perhaps a $20,000 or $30,000 renovation and improvements to a building.

"The manufacturing, the cotton mills, they're gone .... We're not really going to have businesses that come into the city of Pickens that are going to be industrial," Perry said, describing how the city would likely see more small businesses and restaurants.

Brackett said they would look at two possible incentive packages — one for new businesses and one for existing businesses that make façade improvements. The criteria could be run through the city's Board of Architectural Review or another board, she said.

The council is set to vote on first reading Feb. 1 a proposal to amend business license fees, she said. The change would require two readings.

"The business license hadn't been updated for about 10 years," Brackett said, describing how it was increased last year. "It was so far behind ... We probably should have just staged it in incrementally."

Mayor David Owens said city officials felt they raised the license fees too high all at one time last year and are readjusting it.