

Seneca working on tailgating plans for

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SENECA — When Clemson's 2019 football season opens at home against Georgia Tech on Aug. 29, Seneca officials hope their city's downtown will have people tailgating, cooking

out, playing games, watching the action on one of several TVs and riding to the game in Death Valley on a CATbus.

City planning and development director Ed Halbig is chairing a committee working to make that dream a reality.

"Obviously, we recognize that there is demand that's being created by changes that are being made over at Clemson University — they are losing between 600-700 parking spaces this year alone because of changes to their parking plan,"

Halbig said during a committee meeting on Thursday. "We see this as an opportunity to bring some of that excitement of Clemson football to downtown Seneca."

While council has not yet approved the proposal, plans would include

Clemson games

purchasing about four TVs that could broadcast games for tailgaters, with sound coming from the system installed by the city for the music that accompanied the Christmas lights last year.

The plan may also include 32 RV spots at

Gignilliat Field that already have electrical hookups. Officials said they could add a sewer dump station for RV camping at Gignilliat.

If the plan is approved, CATbus shuttles would

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pick people up on game day at Gignilliat and Norton Thompson Park to take them to the game.

"The idea is to get them downtown to go out to eat, visit the shops and spend time in Seneca," Moulder said. "The tailgating and shuttle service is designed to bring people in on a Saturday who wouldn't otherwise come downtown. I see it as an opportunity to bring people in to go eat dinner, go to the brewery and once again spotlight downtown Seneca and provide a reason for people to come down there seven Saturdays out of a year."

Ray Murphy, president of the Downtown Seneca Merchants Association, called the plan a good one for area businesses.

"Any time you can bring a large number of people in a close proximity to our businesses, that's definitely going to be positive, there's no question," he said. "We actually briefly talked about it almost a year ago, and they've done their homework and they're still doing some more stuff on it. The fact that they're asking us for our input and including us in it is just another great piece of communication between the city and the downtown businesses."

Moulder and Halbig said about \$45,000 in hospitality and accommodations tax funds has been set aside in the proposed 2020 city budget for the project downtown and at Gignilliat. Part of that money would be used to buy TVs

and other equipment for tailgaters, as well as provide the sewer dump station at Gignilliat. Officials said electricity is already available at the parking spaces near Norton Thompson Park.

Current plans call for food truck vendors in the area to provide other meal options for tailgaters who don't want to bring their own food to prepare.

"You can pull up, open up the back of your car or whatever and if you want to, put out your grill, and if you've got a cooler full of beer, then you're going to be able to do that," Halbig said. "We're hoping to get other people in that aren't the common tailgaters. Once they see that we have food trucks and other offerings, when they come to Game 4 or Game 5, they may leave some of their stuff at home."

The focus of the plans is Clemson's seven home football games and possibly the Clemson-South Carolina game in Columbia.

There are no current plans to charge this year for tailgating

spaces would be available to Clemson stadium for games

spaces downtown, though the committee did discuss the possibility Thursday of charging for the RV spaces at Gignilliat.

Halbig said the committee is working to be ready by the first game.

"We've got our foot on the gas," Halbig said. "We were directed to get it done."

The season opener is on a Thursday night when Jazz on the Alley is going on at Ram Cat Alley, but committee members said they don't believe there will be a conflict and that Jazz could actually help attract people for the new event.

"Jazz on the Alley may be the thing that actually primes the

pump to make this situation work," Halbig said.

"We hope we have that problem," city recreation director and committee member Rick Lacey added. "That's a great problem to have if you're running out of parking."

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Scott Moulder
Seneca city administrator