

Debate over two bills aimed at standardizing the process of obtaining a business license are expected to resume today in the South Carolina House of Representatives.

One of the bills, "South Carolina Business License Tax Standardization Act" (H.3650), was introduced in February 2017 by Rep. Bill Sandifer, R-Oconee, Chairman of the Labor, Commerce, and Industry Committee.

The bill would create a uniform process of obtaining business licenses across South Carolina and make the Secretary of State responsible for collecting business license fees through a central filing location online.

Every for profit business operating in Beaufort County, including all four municipalities, is required to have a valid business license and pay an annual fee based on a percentage of the organization's annual gross income and calculated on a specified classification scale.

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce has longstanding support for simplifying the process for all business. The standardization of the business licensing process will make it easier for a business to operate in different cities, towns and counties. The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce also supports a bill that would establish one expiration date for a business license and the ability for a firm to file online.

However, there are provisions in the bills that could be detrimental to our municipality's ability to operate and the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce opposes those measures.

Consideration should be given to standardizing the rate and classifications, the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce encourages the adoption of the NAICS code for business classification. The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce recognizes the need for compromise in Columbia for pro-business changes to the licensing reform but not at the cost of municipal operations.