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HIGHWAY 17 PROJECT

Town votes to condemn 2 properties

BY PRENTISS FINDLAY
The Post and Courier

MOUNT PLEASANT — Town Council voted Tuesday night to exercise its power of eminent domain to acquire property where a pharmacy and bank are located in order to build a major road project.

The commercial real estate is needed for the town's planned U.S. Highway 17 overpass that would connect Interstate 526 and Hungryneck Boulevard.

Council took the action against the owners of CVS/pharmacy and the National Bank of South Carolina, both of which are located on U.S. 17 at the boulevard.

The vote happened without discussion after a closed-door executive

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session to receive legal advice regarding obtaining ownership of the two properties.

Afterward, Brad Morrison, director of the town Department of Transportation, said in an interview that CVS is on 1.2 acres and NBSC is on 0.84 acres of land. Morrison said he could not discuss appraisals for the properties.

"Until it's settled, we can't release any of the numbers," Morrison said. "We're doing this to be able to maintain our schedule."

Councilman Ken Glasson made the motion to condemn the property, which council approved unanimously. "We cannot come to terms with them," Glasson said in an interview after the vote. However, Glasson said he is optimistic that negotiations will continue between the town, CVS and NBSC.

In 2007, Town Council voted to condemn land at Shem Creek for a park. However, it later came to terms with the owners of the property, which it purchased for \$6 million.

Mayor Billy Swails was absent from the council meeting because of an illness, a staffer said.

Acting Mayor Paul Gawrych said, "We're definitely going to build the road. It's coming here and we're going to acquire the properties."

It wasn't clear if representatives of the bank and the pharmacy were at the meeting.

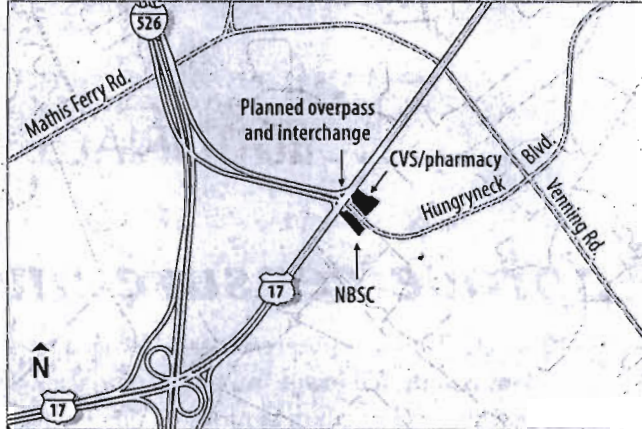
The town received \$44.4 million from the state Transportation Infrastructure Bank to build the project.

Hungryneck Boulevard is a new alternate route that parallels U.S. 17 and is intended to help relieve traffic snarls. It runs from the interchange where the land is being condemned north to Six-Mile Road.

U.S. 17, also known as Johnnie Dodds Boulevard, is being widened from four lanes to six lanes in a Charleston County-run \$70 million RoadWise project funded through the half-cent sales tax. The work involves 3.5 miles of the boulevard from the Arthur Ravenel

Council condemns land

Mount Pleasant Town Council voted unanimously Tuesday to condemn properties where CVS/pharmacy and the National Bank of South Carolina are located. Council said it has been negotiating with the owners of the land that it needs for a new \$44 million overpass and interchange connecting I-526 and Hungryneck Boulevard.



Jr. Bridge to I-526 and Hungryneck Boulevard.

The morning after his victory in November, Swails said that his top priority was widening 2.5 miles of U.S. 17 from the Isle of Palms connector to S.C. Highway 41. The town has \$14 million for the project in the bank, and work already has begun.

Swails wants to continue the

U.S. 17 widening for another 2.5 miles from S.C. 41 to Darrell Creek Trail. The \$14 million needed for that part of the project is not yet in hand. U.S. 17 often is stalled halfway up the Ravenel Bridge as commuters make their way home.

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