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News - S.C. Politics
Thursday, May 13, 2010

Richland gets farmers market solution

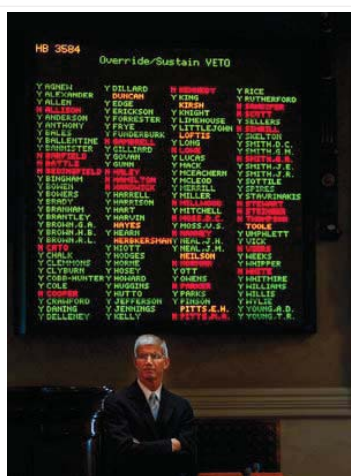
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Richland County taxpayers are likely on the hook for a failed state farmers' market plan.

Tuesday, a panel of House members approved a resolution allowing the county to use its accommodations-tax proceeds to pay for a \$4.5 million piece of property. The county bought and deeded the 146 acres to the state in hopes of landing the new state farmers' market. Lexington County was ultimately chosen as the home for the new market, leaving Richland County with a piece of property that had no purpose.

The resolution House members approved Tuesday allows Richland County to use its accommodations-tax money to pay for the land, exempting it from the requirement that accommodations-tax revenue be used solely for tourism-related purposes. Also under the deal, about 110 acres will be deeded to the S.C. Research Authority for the construction of an industrial park, while the remaining 37 acres would be returned to Richland County.

-- Gina Smith



The SC House of Representatives had a busy calendar Wednesday. Among the amendments and bills they voted on was a vote to override Governor Mark Sanford's veto of a cigarette tax. Here, Rep. Harry Cato, R-Greenville, watches as the final votes are entered. The House voted to override the veto.
- TIM DOMINICK/tDominick@thestate.com /The State

Governor to report whereabouts

A House panel has approved a bill requiring the governor to inform the lieutenant governor when he is out of the state. Should the governor be out of contact with his staff or the head of the State Law Enforcement Division for 12 hours, the lieutenant governor can temporarily assume the role of governor if there is a public health emergency, life-threatening natural disaster, nuclear accident or other emergency, according to the bill. Questions about the order of succession came to light last June when Gov. Mark Sanford disappeared from the state and misled his staff about his whereabouts.

-- Gina Smith

Senate OKs ethics probe openness

The Senate has approved legislation that would open up ethics investigations to public scrutiny as soon as decisions to pursue

charges are made. The 38-0 Senate vote Wednesday sends the bill back to the House. It's one of several measures legislators have taken up this year in the wake of a scandal involving Gov. Mark Sanford that led to investigations of his travel practices.

-- The Associated Press

Sanford vetoes higher court fees

Now all three branches of South Carolina state government are fighting over money. Gov. Mark Sanford on Wednesday vetoed court fee increases.

"It really will be a torpedo below the water line," said state Supreme Court Chief Justice Jean Toal. "It would absolutely sink the judicial system, potentially."

The fees were needed after years of state spending cuts left Toal's court system short on cash and reserve accounts emptied. The temporary fees on civil court filings and depositions would generate about \$21 million. Toal said she'd be confronted with laying off court reporters and law clerks who do judges' legal legwork.

But Sanford said the fees would strain budgets and cut off access to courts.

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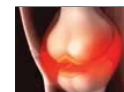
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