
LIBPA August 2004 Newsletter

The 1% Sales Tax:

Over the next few months there will be a great deal of information available to the members of our community regarding reasons to vote for or against the 1% sales tax. To provide our members with the basic information following are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions regarding a 1 % sales tax.

Why must the citizens of Beaufort County pay for their roads when it is the state's responsibility to fund such projects? In theory, the state should fund and build the roads. In fact, it does not have the money and is not going to get the money in the near future. The State Department of Transportation has recently, due to low interest rates, borrowed enough money to fund the next 7 years of scheduled road projects. That is how the widening of Sams Point Road was funded. Either we, the citizens of Beaufort County, build the roads we need now or they will not be built.

Has this type of tax worked anywhere in South Carolina? In 1997 York County, South Carolina was the first county to pass a sales tax for the purpose of building roads. The referendum passed by only 200 votes, was for 7 years but raised enough money for the designated projects (\$99 million) and after 6.5 years was cancelled. The voters of York County expressed their support of the results of the tax by passing a second referendum in 2003 for \$173 million. In the second referendum 73% of the voters supported the tax. The biggest complaint regarding the sales tax in York County was that they did not get the projects started as fast as the public desired after the referendum passed.

The proposed sales tax is often referred to as "regressive tax". What does the term mean?

Simply stated the term "regressive tax" means that each of us would pay one penny of tax for each dollar we spend. Thus, those making less money would pay a larger share of their total income than those with a higher income. A progressive type of tax is the income tax since the more you make the more you pay.

How long will this tax be in effect? No longer than 5 years and if sufficient money is collected to fund the projects prior to the end of the 5 years the tax must cease at that point. This occurred in York County due to funds being provided from the state. There is no legal way for the tax to be extended.

What effect will the tourist have on this tax? It is estimated that for every dollar collected by the tax, the citizens of Beaufort County would pay 47 cents and tourist will pay 53 cents. In the past Beaufort County has encountered serious problems in getting contractors to complete road construction projects in a satisfactory manner.

Is there any guarantee the 1% sales tax projects will be any different? No, there are never guarantees for the success of any construction project. However, the Beaufort County Engineering Department has a great deal of recent experience with transportation projects, both good and bad.

What assurance do I have that after the referendum was passed some of the projects will not be changed?

To change the projects which the voters approved would be a violation of state law and will not occur.

What is different with this sales tax referendum from the last one which failed to be approved by the voters of Beaufort County? The manner in which the projects were selected is different and although some of the projects are the same, many are different.

How were the projects selected? A commission, composed of private citizens of Beaufort County, held meetings throughout the county to solicit projects from the citizens of the county. These forums were held throughout the county. The commission then selected the projects which should be offered to the voters in the referendum. County Council then approved the referendum but did not change any of the proposed projects.

Why are there other types of projects, such as parks, included in the referendum? The inclusion of other types of projects is an effort to appeal to a wider variety of people and hopefully get more votes in favor of the sales tax.

Why should the residents and business members of Lady's Island vote for the referendum? As the fastest growing community in northern Beaufort County we will either build adequate roads in advance of being overwhelmed with the additional traffic or wait until the quality of life reaches a crisis point and then search for a solution.

Specifically, what is the benefit of the proposed tax to Lady's Island? The biggest benefit is a second bridge beside the McTeer Bridge and making Lady's Island Drive (802) from the McTeer Bridge to the intersection with Highway 21 a 4 lane road. This will provide a 4 lane road on and off of the island. There is also money for the Waterfront Park which many on Lady's Island use. There is also a variety of roads on the island which would be paved. There are additional projects in the referendum located on

Port Royal Island, which if completed, would significantly reduce the need for the controversial "northern bypass". Approval by the voters in November of the 1% sales tax is not a magic bullet for all future traffic problems of Lady's Island. It would provide significant relief for the next decade and with control of future growth, we stand a chance of not being overwhelmed by traffic.

Editor's Note: This is the first of a two-part article.

Lady's Island Building Permits:

Recognizing that "figures lie and liars figure" it is always challenging to take data at the mid-point of a year and project where we, on Lady's Island, will be at the end of the year. This is especially true in regard to the number of residential building permits issued, since this is one of the key indicators as to the rate of growth on the island. Following is a comparison of the residential permits issued on Lady's Island in the first six months of each year for this decade and based on that information a projection for the total 2004 residential permits.

YEAR	MID YEAR	END OF YEAR
2000	102	179
2001	95	169
2002	92	163
2003	147	263
2004	109	193 (projected)

Note: The mid year figures for 2000 and 2001 are estimates only. The year end figures are based on existing records.

A complaint, heard with increasing frequency, is that it is extremely difficult to find available, undeveloped land for construction of new homes on Lady's Island. Supporting that is the number of queries received regarding the feasibility of rezoning rural property to community preservation to allow an increased number of houses to be constructed per each acre of land. Every indicator points to the island reaching a point of development where small parcels of undeveloped property are becoming increasingly difficult to locate and purchase. However, there remains an abundance of undeveloped property for residential development in the previously approved planned unit developments. Thus, the number of homes being built on Lady's Island will probably continue to remain in the 160-200 range each year for the rest of the decade. However, in the future the number of contractors building these homes on Lady's Island may be reduced and the initial asking price for these homes may significantly increase. This increase in new home prices will be directly related to the increased cost resulting from the requirement for the developer to build an infrastructure

Lady's Island Law Enforcement Statistics:

When a Beaufort County Sheriff's Deputy responds to an incident on Lady's Island a report is required to be submitted as a matter of record. Following is a review of a representative number of types of incidents reports, which were submitted for the first 6 months of 2004 as compared to the previous 3 years.

TYPE OF INCIDENT	2001	2002	2003	2004
Criminal domestic violence	25	56	48	35
Traffic Accidents	33	44	59	74
Breaking and Entering (Vehicles)	30	25	32	29
Vehicle Thefts	12	16	16	13
Petit Larceny	91	108	119	82
Grand larceny	12	25	35	34
Criminal Sexual Conduct	5	8	4	3
Robbery	9	4	4	5
Murder	0	1	0	0

Burglary

71

74

122

63

During the first 6 months of 2004 a Sheriff's Deputy responded on Lady's Island to an average of 4 incidents each day for a total of 1391 incident reports. This represents only a minor increase from the first 6 months of the previous year, which had 1358 incident reports. During this period the most frequent type of incident (120) involved a nonviolent domestic dispute. Worthy of note is the consistent increase in traffic accidents. One cannot review the total incident report without great appreciation and respect for the law enforcement officers of the Sheriff's Department and their contribution to our community. The statistics indicate we are privileged to live in a very safe community; thanks to their efforts.

Editor's Note: We offer a special thanks to Lt. Jimmy Walton of the Sheriff's Department for his courtesy and gracious cooperation in researching the information contained in this article. The openness and courtesy we always receive in response to our request for information is a complement to Sheriff Tanner.

A Lady's island - St. Helena Fire District Report: by Fire Chief Clayton Ellis

Following are our plans for Fiscal 2004-05:

The fire station located on Sam's Point Road will be replaced. This station and the district have outgrown it. We now have 2 firefighters stationed there and an EMS unit with 2 personnel. The new station will be on the lot next to the current one, and the old station will be used as a maintenance shop. A new pumper truck has been ordered for this station. Delivery is expected sometime in the spring. We will be replacing our out dated self contained breathing apparatus (SCBAs).

The first six months of 2004 have been busy. Following are the type and number of calls which we responded to:

Medical - 515	House Fires – 15	Mobile Home – 8
Car Fires – 16	Brush – 97	Alarms – 135
Service – 85	Mutual Aid – 2	Car Accidents – 117
	Plane Crash - 2	

Beaufort County Rail Trail: by Bob Stoothoff, President Pathways Connect

The Port Royal Railroad, established just after the Civil War, ceased to operate in November of 2003. Governor Sanford has recently asked for the planned sale of the railroad right of way and the Port of Port Royal by the South Carolina Ports Authority. This railroad right of way connects the towns of Yemassee and Port Royal, while passing through beautiful rural landscapes and the neighborhoods within Beaufort and Port Royal.

The decision by the Ports Authority and the Governor to sell this right of way has given Beaufort County and the involved municipalities an opportunity to provide for their citizens and visitors what they themselves have been working toward – walkable, bikeable communities. This 25-mile ribbon of property may hold a once in a lifetime opportunity for Beaufort County.

Involved in this subject are a number of very legitimate public issues. Certainly, what is the best use of the right of way is the key decision. Who will pay for the right of way, who will pay for it to be developed and who will pay for it to be maintained after it is developed are also valid questions. Should this be a private or public venture? There are as many opinions as there are questions in this matter.

Pathways Connect is an organization which exists to promote trails and bike paths. Naturally, we in Pathways Connect believe that the best use of the right of way is to convert it to a linear trail for cyclist, walkers, runners and other non-motorized transportation uses. We accept that there are other opinions as to what is the best use of the right of way. As long as the final decision allows for public discussion we will support it.

Now is the time for the public to be heard. Accordingly, we urge LIBPA members to participate in this very special opportunity to determine the best public use of this unique five hundred acre property. We urge you to attend meetings, ask questions and make your viewpoint known to those who are working on this project to include your County Council representatives. As President of Pathways Connect, Bob Stoothoff can be reached at 522-3969 or by email at bobstoothoff@earthlink.net to express your thoughts on this subject or to offer your help in making this linear park a reality.

Thank You!

A special thanks to Mr. Wendell Mulligan, Director of Public Works for SCDOT in this area. He took the initiative to request funds in his 2004 budget to support a street sweeper for all of the local DOT highways which have sidewalks and gutters. He also included sweeping of the McTeer Bridge. We, in LIBPA, have asked, pleaded, begged and negotiated to have the streets (Lady's Island Parkway and Sams Point Road) cleaned. Mayor Rauch and the City of Beaufort did volunteer to do a portion of the streets in the Village Center. We realize that the wheels of governmental bureaucracy move slowly but regardless of when the program actually starts, we appreciate that someone heard our plea and responded with a solution.

The Power of Public Relations: by Libby G. Barnes, President & CEO, Greater Beaufort Chamber of Commerce
Our area has been, as they say, "discovered." Over the past five years, and especially the last two, the Beaufort area has been the topic of feature articles and recognitions in a growing number of national and regional magazines and newspapers and a few books. Just recently, Beaufort was featured in an article in Fortune magazine as one of the top five places to retire. We've been working with the Wall Street Journal for about three weeks on a similar feature due for publication on Aug. 9.

How does this happen? Sometimes a travel writer or editor will slip into town, do some research and write a story, and we don't even know about it until the story is out. Sometimes a travel writer or editor comes into town, does the research and calls the Chamber for additional information to write the story, so we help influence the story. Or sometimes a travel writer or editor calls us about doing a story on our community and we help direct them to story ideas, interesting people to interview, provide tours and first-hand experiences of life in the Lowcountry, and good factual information.

More often than not, though, these writers and editors have their interest piqued because of the Chamber's positive, proactive public relations efforts to tell "the story" about all that is unique and special about Beaufort and our region, South Carolina's Treasured Coast. Our visitor bureau and professional tourism marketing staff maintain an impressive list of national and regional media to whom they frequently send story ideas and news of interest. We send regular announcements and photos of upcoming festivals and events of interest to travelers and maintain a media room on our popular website, www.beaufortsc.org.

So what does this all mean to residents of Lady's Island and the larger community? First, it means more people discover our part of the world. For some, that's a bonus; others may not agree. What we can agree on though are the real facts:

- > tourism brings new dollars into our community
- > these dollars mean jobs for thousands of residents and true livelihood for many business owners
- > when visitors have a great experience, they become re-locators, many of whom purchase property or homes on Lady's Island
- > the price of Lady's Island property continues to rise, making your own investment in commercial or residential property more valuable whether it stays in your family or is sold
- > tourism helps keep your property taxes down – according to the Travel Industry Association of America, the average U.S. homeowner pays \$804 less a year in property tax because of tourism spending, a number that would likely be much higher in coastal communities like ours
- > tourism and a growing resident population put more strain on our infrastructure (roads and bridges, schools and hospitals), while at the same time adding a new tax base for our local jurisdictions
- > re-locators bring new businesses, talented people, and people who are actively engaged in their community, such as many involved with LIBPA. These businesses and individuals have a valuable impact on the vitality of our community and our quality of life.

LIBPA members are "out in front" in working together to plan for the future. You have committed members who care about responsible, smart growth, preservation of natural resources, building community and building trust by working together.

The popular line "build it and they will come" is apropos for Lady's Island and our S.C. Treasured Coast, and it can be interpreted in two ways: build, build, build away and "they" will come anyway in any form, with any result; or build community and our future by working together so as "they" come we will successfully manage the outcome and have a sound, vibrant community – a place we all can call home and in which we can all take great pride.

The Chamber is pleased to be a partner working together with LIBPA to do just that. We look forward to

a long and positive relationship.

If you would like a copy of all the accolades our area has received recently, just e-mail

tourismdirector@beaufortsc.org.

Lady's Island Sign Status:

LIBPA member Frank Bailey of Spectrum Graphics recently removed the "Welcome to Lady's Island" sign located near the McTeer Bridge for the purpose of performing some fix up and paint work on it. However, after closer examination of the sign it was determined that the sign was past the point of repair and would require replacement.

Thus, both of the "Welcome to Lady's Island" signs originally installed by LIBPA require replacement.

LIBPA President Jan Malinowski has requested concurrence from the City of Beaufort to place a "Welcome to Lady's Island" sign in the vicinity of the landscaped area just as you leave the Wood's Memorial Bridge. Upon receiving their concurrence LIBPA will initiate action to replace that sign which was destroyed during the widening of Highway 21.

Next month the LIBPA Board of Directors will make a decision regarding the type of sign to be purchased for the McTeer Bridge location. To each of the business members who have contributed to the sign fund for this project a special thank you. As an organization, we had not anticipated replacing both signs at the same time.

Island Notes:

New Development. The two new houses presently under construction on Meridian Road at Crow's Nest Avenue are part of the first phase of a development by Drew and Debbie Murphy to be called Meridian Place. The houses will be two stories and 1600-2000 square feet in size. Upon completion, the development will consist of 10 to 12 homes. For additional details you are encouraged to call Debbie at 812-0035 or Palmetto Real Estate at 522-1280.

Rumor of the Day. From a variety of sources it has been mentioned that the Eckerd's store and pharmacy located in the Beaufort Plaza Annex intends to move to its own store which would be located in the vicinity of the intersection of 802 and Highway 21 near the Movie Gallery. It may be true that such an intention does exist but neither the City of Beaufort nor Beaufort County has received, at this time, a formal request for construction of such a building.

At the request of individual developers the Community Preservation Committee continues to meet with them and their representatives to discuss possible projects in the Village Center. This is a system that is working well and provides a service to both the community and potential developers.

Welcome To Lady's Island:

The following two businesses have recently selected Lady's Island as their new home. LIBPA welcomes them, wishes them success and looks forward to working with each of them.

Patterson Residential LLC located at 90 Sams Point Road will specialize in remodeling of existing homes and construction of new homes. Allen and Julie Patterson, the owners, invite you to contact them for additional information at 470-0400 or by e-mail at allen@pattersonresidential.com.

Revolution Fitness which was previously located in the City of Beaufort has relocated to the Oakwood Plaza on Sams Point Road. Owner and manager Gina Szarak indicates that classes will include yoga, spinning, a muscle hour with free weights and a combination weight and spinning class. There will be free child care and the first class is free. For additional details Gina invites you to call 521-4494 or stop by and visit!

School Report:

On August 9th the schools on the Lady's Island will open their doors for another year and through those doors will walk over 4,000 students. The education of those students represents the largest industry on Lady's Island. The good news is that we are privileged to have many great schools operated by dedicated and extremely competent individuals. The challenging news is that as the fastest growing community in northern Beaufort County we are rapidly nearing or exceeding the capacity of our existing schools. Following is a brief look at how we stand at the beginning of the 2004 school year.

Lady's Island Elementary: Being on a year round schedule Lady's Island Elementary School has already opened its doors for a new school year. Principal Terry Bennett has provided the following numbers and demographics as of the 5th day of school:

Total student population: 394 which is similar to last years 396. The capacity of the school facilities is 435 students. To provide additional space, 3 mobile trailers are used for support services but none are used for classrooms.

Demographic Information:

- 188 White (48%)
- 167 Black (42%)
- 30 Hispanic (8%)
- 9 Other (2%)

Coosa Elementary School: Since opening their doors in 1998, Coosa Elementary School has gained 1 to 3 classrooms of students each year. In anticipation of a similar increase in enrollment this school year 2 additional mobile classrooms have been made available. Principal Cindy Keener reports that last school year ended with an enrollment of 620 students. That required the use of 4 mobile classrooms since the school has a capacity of 550 students.

Lady's Island Middle School: Principal Pricilla Drake indicates that approximately 730 students are anticipated to start the school year. This is an increase of about 40 students from last year. The school has a capacity of 850 students. Trailers were utilized for classrooms last year due to construction projects to upgrade the heating and air condition, improve the lighting and modernize some of the bathrooms. These projects are scheduled for completion prior to the school year beginning.

Beaufort High School Principal Dan Durbin is anticipating a student population of approximately 1600 students which is similar to the student population last year. The capacity of the school is 1500 students.

Mr. Tim Johnson, the new headmaster at **Beaufort Academy** (pre-K through 12) predicts their 2004 student population to be in the area of 335 students at the beginning of the year. The capacity of the school is approximately 450 to 500. Mr. Johnson indicates that class size will be maintained at a maximum of 18 students.

At **St. Peter's Catholic School** (K4 through 8th grade) they expect a student population in the range of 230 students. This number of students does not reach their capacity and will allow classes to be limited to 25 students.

Editors Note: We appreciate the Principals of each of the schools on Lady's Island, public and private, sharing information with LIBPA and the community regarding their schools.

2004: A Good Year For Real Estate: by Jerry Marlow

Following are statistical comparisons of 2003/2004 real estate sales in northern Beaufort County for the period Jan 1 to June 30. It should be noted that this data does not include real estate activity on Fripp and Harbor Island.

AREA	VOLUME (Millions)			UNITS		
	2003	2004	CHANGE	2003	2004	CHANGE
Beaufort	13.1	17.2	+31%	88	69	+19%
Port Royal	66.6	9.2	+39%	44	60	+36%
Burton	16.3	18.8	+15%	101	107	+6%
Lady's Island	29.9	37.0	+24%	139	160	+15%
St. Helena	5.8	5.6	-3%	25	19	-24%
N. of Whale Branch	0.3	0.8	+173%	3	8	+166%

Total N. Beaufort County	72.0	88.5	+23%	370	423	+14%
---------------------------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	------------	------------	-------------

As can be seen from the data, sales for the period ending June 30, 2004 show a strong gain over same period in 2003. Sales for the first 6 months of 2004 showed a 22.9% increase in volume and a 14.3% increase in the number of units closed for northern Beaufort County. Lady's Island had a 23.7% increase in volume and 15.1% increase in units closed. However, as can be seen by the following data the price of the individual residence in northern Beaufort County continues to increase in selling price.

AREA	Average Price		
	2003	2004	DIFFERENCE
Beaufort	\$226,214	\$249,493	+10%
Port Royal	\$149,623	\$152,479	+2%
Burton	\$161,830	\$175,396	+8%
Lady's Island	\$214,984	\$231,012	+8%
St. Helena	\$230,008	\$293,428	+28%
N. of Whale Branch	\$99,833	\$102,133	+2%
Total N. Beaufort County	\$194,544	\$209,185	+8%

For the first time, the average selling price of a home in northern Beaufort County exceeded the \$200,000 mark. The average price of a home sold in northern Beaufort County in the first 6 months of 2004 was \$209,185. This represents a 7.5% increase in average price as compared to the same period the preceding year. These figures are from the Beaufort County Multiple Listing Service only and represent the sale of single family homes.