



April 2005 Newsletter

Island Notes:

A special thanks to U. S. Representative Jo Wilson for his support of the Lady's Island –St. Helena District Fire Department request for a grant from the Department of Homeland Security Assistance to Firefighters Program. Representative Wilson recently announced that our fire department would receive a grant of \$153,212 for equipment. The Lady's Island-St. Helena Fire Department was one of three in the state of South Carolina to receive such a grant and the only one in Beaufort County.

One Median Left! Of the 5 medians on Sams Point Road, 4 have been adopted by members of LIBPA for planting and maintenance. The businesses are Beaufort Planning Group (Brad Hill), Ballenger Realty (Everett Ballenger), Martin Landscaping (Wade Martin) and DoctorsTristen and Angela Greenwalt, DMD, Lady's Island Dental Clinic. The last available median is the one located directly in front of Beaufort Academy. LIBPA members Brad Hill and Bob Stoothoff have done a great job on this project. We offer a special thank you to them and to each of the business members who have agreed to "adopt" a median.

New businesses on Sams Point Road. The expanded home business district portion of Sams Point Road continues to attract new businesses. LIBPA member Mortgage Associates, presently located on Lady's Island Drive, will move in the near future to 72 Sams Point Road. The recently renovated house at 97 Sam's Point Road will serve as headquarters for Carolina Chutes and Recycling (522-3887) which specializes in trash and linen chutes for multistory (high rise) buildings, Oasis Mosquito Systems (522-8928) which offers custom designed mosquito systems and Pro Pier (524-5155) which provides specialty foundation products. Mr. Andrew Luckey, president of both Carolina Chutes and Oasis Mosquito Systems, indicates that a strong argument can be made to locate his business headquarters in an area such as Charlotte, North Carolina where he does a great deal of business. However, based on the quality of life he chose Lady's Island to live, work and raise his family. Mr. Tray Ambrose will join Mr. Luckey as a partner in the Pro Pier business. To each of the new businesses, welcome and thank you for choosing Lady's Island. We in LIBPA look forward to working with each of you.

Thanks Deputies. To sheriff's Deputies Cpl. Scott Rodriguez and Cpl. Beverly Bush who, while responding to a call on Lady's Island, noticed dogs on the property being mistreated and took steps to insure the mistreatment ceased, the animals rescued and the property owner arrested and charged.

The Front Porch: by Ken Bush, LIBPA President

Last month I was invited to speak to the Sea Island Rotary about "What is LIBPA?" It was easy to say what the organization is not: LIBPA is not a committee appointed by County Council, nor is it a political party or a chapter of a national service club. While some of the recent projects are similar to those of a garden club or public land use preservation group, LIBPA is none of these.

I came to the conclusion, that in some respects, LIBPA is similar to the "Front Porch" that was so popular in the small southern towns that I knew growing up in the 1950's and 60's in Florida. It provides a forum for residents and small business owners on the island to exchange ideas about a wide variety of subjects. Several times a month, LIBPA is an informal meeting place where members can listen to community leaders, both elected and appointed, address such varied issues as growth, traffic, recreation, crime prevention and education. A sign of our times is that our forum today uses e-mail, a great web site and a community newsletter in addition to the monthly meeting.

Sometimes LIBPA takes a position on an issue but, more often, takes the role of facilitator, interacting with state and local government agencies. This was the role of LIBPA in the recent widening of Sams Point Road: providing a forum for all island residents and businesses to work with those designing the project and those actually widening the road. The results, while never satisfying to all concerned, did provide solutions both before and during construction.

Today, LIBPA continues such exchanges and is sponsoring projects which usually meet the "If not LIBPA, who?" test. The recent purchase of "Welcome to Lady's Island" signs and the landscaping of the Sams Point Road medians are examples of these types of projects.

With the continued support of a diverse membership, LIBPA general membership meetings will continue to be a forum to discuss local critical issues that affect all of us in our daily lives. I would like to take this opportunity to remind our members that our board of director's meeting is always open to the public and our members have a special invitation to attend. They are held at the Lady's Island Airport on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 5:30 PM. They are another form of the "Front Porch" meetings and are always worth attending.

Finally, to each of the members who have responded so quickly to the recent invoice for annual dues, a special thank you. We will be sending out reminders to those of you who, we hope, simply forgot to respond in regard to the annual dues notice. To those of you who have included, with your dues, recommendations on ways we can improve our association – great! We appreciate you taking the time to let us hear your ideas and they will definitely be considered by myself and the board of directors.

Thanks For Caring:

Recently an amendment to the South Carolina Code of Laws was proposed which would deny a municipality, upon annexation of a special purpose district, the automatic right to replace such services with their own services unless "imminent danger, to person and property, could be demonstrated". Under present law, if Lady's Island was annexed the Lady's Island Fire Department could be replaced by the City of Beaufort fire department. Our State Representative and LIBPA member Ms. Catherine Ceips identified the amendment as being of interest to Lady's Island residents and requested LIBPA review the proposed amendment. In addition, she requested an evaluation of the potential effect on our island.

For general information, the City of Beaufort and the Lady's Island-St. Helena Fire District have reached an agreement regarding fire protection services in the annexed areas on Lady's Island. Simply stated, on our island the Lady's Island Fire Department provides the services and the City of Beaufort pays a fair fee for the protection. This is a compliment to the leadership in the City of Beaufort and our Fire District. However, on general principal and in the interest of always placing the safety of the individual resident first, LIBPA recommended concurrence with the proposed change to the existing law.

The proposed amendment is still in the process of being considered at committee level where arguments for and against it are being presented. Thanks to the courtesy and consideration given to LIBPA by Representative Ceips we had an opportunity to present an opinion. A very special thank you to Representative Ceips for her willingness to ask us for an opinion and once received, to consider it based on merit. It adds real meaning to the word "representative".

LIBPA Web Site Well Received:

Over 2 years ago Steve Thompson of PC Web Services proposed that LIBPA contract with him to develop a web site for the organization. When informed the LIBPA budget could not afford it, he graciously offered to develop a web site as his contribution to the community. Over the years the web site has evolved, through the trial and error method, to its present format.

To evaluate if the site is worth the effort required to keep it current, an analysis of the web site was recently completed.

The analysis covered the period January 23, 2005 to March 23, 2005 with the following results:

- The site received 737 hits during the test period or an average of 12 visits per day.
- Approximately 50% of all visitors first came to the main page.
- The second most popular page was the newsletter.
- The 3rd most popular page was the list of members.
- Of the 10 members joining during the period in question, 7 joined via the web site.
- 30% of all visits to the site occurred during Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

With the popularity of the web site comes the question of how best to utilize it to better support our community in general and specifically our business community. Should advertising be allowed on the web site? If so what type? Should links be established for those business members who have existing web sites? Please consider these questions and let a board member know your thoughts on the matter. While considering these questions please take a minute and visit the LIBPA web site at www.libpa.org. All recommendations as to how we can improve the site will be welcome.

Thanks Chief Ellis For Exceptional Service To Our Community:

Chief Clayton Ellis has been the face of the Lady's Island-St. Helena Fire Department for over 31 years. As the "Chief" he has led the fire district to standards of excellence in fire fighting recognized throughout the area. He has been the voice, over the years, in county council budget meetings asking for increased funding to modernize the island's fire fighting capability. Thanks to his personal efforts, each resident of Lady's Island and St. Helena Island is safer today. It should be noted that Chief Ellis' wife, Melinda served for many years as secretary to the fire district and as a valuable member of the LISH family in so many ways. She is leaving the fire department at the same time as her husband. We extend our appreciation for her contribution and wish her good luck in her future service as an emergency room nurse at Beaufort Memorial Hospital.

As we say a heartfelt "thank you" to Chief Ellis and wish him the best of luck in his retirement, we welcome Chief Bruce Kline and look forward to working with him in the future.

Factory Creek Project Disapproved:

The Beaufort County Board of Appeals (ZBOA) recently denied "special use" status, required to build residential units in the Village Center, for the proposed project (4 homes and 1 office) planned for the property adjacent to Lady's Landing on Factory Creek Bluff. This project had previously been recommended for approval by the Community Preservation Committee, the Beaufort County Development Review Team and the Corridor Review Board. At the ZBOA meeting some members of the community indicated objection to the project based on the proposed location of the commercial office being next to Lady's Landing. No specific reason was given by the board for denial of the request. The owner of the property now has 3 choices (1) appeal the decision in court, (2) delete the residential units and build only commercial property or (3) request the City of Beaufort approve the original project as part of an annexation agreement.

Property Considered For Rezoning:

At the January meeting of the Lady's Island Community Preservation Committee representatives of the Tidal Creek Fellowship Church requested rezoning of 2 parcels (20 acres) located on Brickyard Pont Road opposite the Partridge Woods Community for the purpose of locating a church on the property. This was 2 pieces of property located in the center of 17 parcels zoned rural and surrounded by property zoned community preservation. The members of the committee evaluated the specific request and recommended the group of 17 parcels be zoned community preservation. On March 16, 2004 a meeting of the Lady's Island Planning Commission Subcommittee was held at the conference room of the Lady's Island Airport to allow the property owners to express their opinions regarding the proposed rezoning. At this meeting, the majority of the concerned property owners who attended, expressed their support for the rezoning of the proposed church property but opposed any other rezoning. Specifically, they desired their property to continue having a rural zoning. Due to the absence of a quorum on the subcommittee no official recommendation was forwarded to the Planning Commission on the proposed rezoning.

This recommended rezoning will be considered by the Planning Commission on April 5, 2005 followed by the Land Management Committee review on April 18, 2005 and finally by County Council at a date to be determined.

2004 Property Taxes On Lady's Island:

As part of an analysis of the recent reassessment of property taxes in Beaufort County the following data was developed to show how the taxes on the properties in each area increased or decreased and by what percentage. To provide some basis of comparison the data for St Helena, which also includes Harbor Island, Hunting Island and Fripp Island, is provided..

	Lady's Island		St. Helena	
	Number	%	Number	%
2004 vs 2003 Property Tax				
Decreased more than 25%	98	1.3	342	3.0
Decreased between 0 - 25%	914	12.5	438	3.8
Increased 0 - 40%	2122	28.9	3548	31.2
Increased 40 - 100%	2253	30.7	3201	28.1
Increased 100 - 200%	1210	16.5	2501	22.0
Increased 200 - 500%	508	6.9	987	8.7
Increased more than 500%	231	3.2	365	3.2
TOTAL	7336	100%	11,382	100%

On Lady's Island 14% of the individual properties enjoyed a decrease in their property taxes while only 6.8% of the properties on St. Helena enjoyed a similar decrease. Interestingly enough, the same per cent of properties (3.2%) in both areas increased in taxes by more than 500%. The majority of all of the properties (60%) in both areas saw an increase in property taxes in the 0 to 100% range.

The Dilemma Of Who Provides Services:

The two most requested services by LIBPA members are to clean the recently widened portion of Sams Point Road and to install a street light at the intersection of Sams Point Road and Brickyard Point Road. The following information is provided in regard to these services.

Clean Sams Point Road. The recently widened portion of Sams Point Road was designed and built with a storm water drainage system which allows dirt and trash to accumulate. In the past LIBPA has approached the Department of Transportation concerning the problem, only to find out their budget allows very limited street and bridge cleaning. LIBPA went to the Beaufort County Public Works Committee with the problem and was told that county government does not provide urban services such as street cleaning. A similar problem arose on the portion of Highway 21 located in the Village Center and Mayor Bill Rauch authorized the City of Beaufort street sweeper to clean the majority of that street even though all of the property is not in the City of Beaufort. LIBPA recently requested an estimate from Sutcliffe Sweep Company to clean the Sams Point Road from the Highway 21 intersection to the intersection with Brickyard Point/Holly Hall Road. Mr. Terry Sutcliffe offered to keep the street clean for approximately \$400 per month or \$4800 per year, if DOT would do a "one time" cleaning of the existing dirt/trash on the street.

Street light at Holly Hall, Brickyard Point, Sams Point Road intersection. LIBPA went to Mr. Tommy Bennett, the manager of our local SCE&G, for guidance and assistance regarding installing a street light at the Brickyard Point Road/Holly Hall intersection with Sams Point Road. First, Mr. Bennett researched the source of the original light that was in place prior to the widening of Sams Point Road. It would appear that the late Colonel Jessie Altman, who served for many years as the City of Beaufort Chief of Police and was a resident of Lady's Island, deemed the intersection a safety problem and arranged for the installation of the light. He also arranged for the City of Beaufort to pay the monthly electrical bill. Colonel Altman's contribution to Beaufort County is almost legendary and this only adds to his long list of accomplishments. The City of Beaufort declined to accept responsibility for the funding of a new light, after the matter was brought to their attention. Mr. Bennett took the time from his busy schedule to personally visit the site and on behalf of SCE&G, offered to install a 400 watt street light on one of the poles adjacent to the intersection of Sams Point and Holly Hall Road at no cost and the monthly electrical bill would be \$15.82 or \$189.84 per year.

This information is provided to our members for their consideration. Certainly the street light project is within the financial capability of LIBPA by utilizing membership dues, while the cost of street sweeping far exceeds the association's ability. The key question is not, can we do some of these projects but rather are they appropriate for LIBPA to undertake. If the decision is to undertake projects of this nature, there is a necessary parallel decision as to how the fund raising will be accomplished.

Finally, a special thank you, with a smile, is offered to the memory of Colonel Jessie Altman, a man of action, who set an example to all of us in how to "get things done".

Beaufort County Growth Tax: by Reed Armstrong, Coastal Preservation League, Beaufort Office

In rapidly growing communities, such as Beaufort County, if the increased tax base from new development is not covering the costs for additional public services and facilities needed to accommodate the growth, then existing residents will see increases in their property taxes. If taxes increase at rates much above inflation, then this is a "growth tax". Whether this has been happening in Beaufort can be judged from examining property taxes over the last several years.

This analysis is an attempt to address this issue, using data provided by the Beaufort County Assessor's Office, looking at the impact on property taxes for residential properties. Since the last countywide reassessment in 1998 through 2003, changes in taxes were due to millage changes only because appraisals remained unchanged for homes that did not have improvements. But with the recent reassessment, 2004 taxes are from the combination of millage adjustments and new appraisals, so effects of the reassessment must be included. Changes in assessed values varied considerably across the county, as indicated in the following comparison among districts and municipalities.

Table 1. Average home values in 2003 and 2004.

Values are for residential property, averaged for each tax district and municipality.

Unincorporated Beaufort County

Tax District	2003	2004	% Change
Port Royal Island	\$84,900	\$132,100	+55.6%
Lady's Island	148,800	217,400	+46.1
St. Helena	155,600	238,100	+53.0
Fripp Island	242,100	469,800	+94.1
Bluffton	215,000	317,800	+47.8
Sheldon	205,600	321,200	+56.2
Municipalities			
Beaufort	\$110,700	\$179,200	+61.9
Port Royal	91,400	126,100	+38.0
Bluffton	102,700	165,100	+60.8
Hilton Head	342,600	652,200	+90.4

Taxes on a \$200,000 Home

Using millages and the above percent changes in assessed values, we can examine what has happened to property taxes over the last few years. In Table 2, example residential properties in each of the tax districts which were valued at \$200,000 in 1998 are tracked through the six years of 1998 through 2004 and the taxes that would be assessed in the different unincorporated districts and municipalities.

Table 2. Property taxes on a \$200,000 home during 1998 – 2004.

(Example is for a residential property that is owner's primary residence, and was valued at \$200,000 in 1998. Appraised values remained at \$200,000 through 2003. For 2004 the value increased by percentages shown in Table 1. Differences in unincorporated districts are due to differing fire and public service district millage. Taxes for municipalities are for the municipal government portion only.)

Unincorporated Beaufort County (total property tax)							
	Property Tax		2004 Taxes	Annual Rate of Change		Total	
Tax District	1998	2003	Appraised Value	Property Tax	1998-03	2003-04	6 Yr (98-04)
Port Royal Is.	\$1291	\$1836	\$311K	\$2191	+8.4%	+19.3%	+70%
Lady's island	1108	1601	292K	1741	+8.9	+8.7	+57
St. Helena	1108	1601	306K	1836	+8.9	+14.7	+66
Fripp Island	1056	1474	388K	2231	+7.9	+51.4	+111
Bluffton	1065	1501	296K	1648K	+8.2	+9.8	+55
Sheldon	1135	1632	312K	1922	+8.8	+17.8	+69
Municipalities (city/town portion of tax bill only)							
Beaufort	\$551	\$587	\$324K	\$723	+1.3	+23.2	+31.0
Port Royal	680	680	276K	938	0.0	+37.9	+38
Bluffton	392	392	322K	540	0.0	+37.8	+38.0
Hilton Head	244	248	381K	340	+0.3	+37.1	+39

For these fairly typical \$200,000 homeowners, property taxes in 2004 increased considerably over the rates of the pre-assessment years in all districts, except Lady's Island. Inflation for this six year period of 1998 through 2004 increased a total of about 15% (Consumer Price Index, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). In comparison, the last column in Table 2 shows that property taxes for these homeowners increased about twice the inflation rate for city/town taxes and about fourfold for residents of unincorporated Beaufort County.

Editor's Note: A special thanks to LIBPA member Reed Armstrong for this article and for doing the necessary research.

Follow The Money:

We frequently hear from individuals, representatives of municipalities and members of council the statement, "We pay the taxes but we don't get, proportionately, a fair share of the benefits". The term "logical nexus" is used to describe the concept that tax dollars should return to the source, from which they are derived. To even consider this concept one must first determine the source of the tax dollars. Accordingly, the following charts present an analysis of the source and amount of property taxes collected in Beaufort County as of the date indicated.

Property Taxes Collected Through Feb. 16th, 2005		
Northern Beaufort County	Amt (mil)	% of County
Beaufort (city)	10.0	4.8
Port Royal (town)	3.1	1.5
Yemassee (town)	0.03	0.01
Burton County	7.6	3.7
Lady's Is/St. Helena (county)	14.5	7.0
Fripp Island (county)	6.2	3.0
Sheldon (county)	3.2	1.5
Total	45.3	21.5%
Southern Beaufort County	Amt (mil)	% of County
Hilton Head	120.5	57.9
Bluffton (town)	3.2	1.5
Bluffton (county)	34.7	16.6
Hilton Head (county)	2.0	1.0
Daufuskie (county)	3.1	1.5
Total	163.5	78.5%

Based on the above data the following statements are indicative of the property tax picture in Beaufort County:

- 79% of all property taxes come from south of the Broad River.
- 21% of all property taxes come from north of the Broad River.
- 58% of all property taxes are paid by residents in the Town of Hilton Head.
- 46% of all property taxes from north of the Broad River come from Lady's, St. Helena (includes Harbor) and Fripp Islands.
- 66% of property taxes come from municipalities.
- 34% of property taxes come from the unincorporated part of the county.

As can be seen the town of Bluffton presently contributes only small percentage (1.5%) of the total property taxes. However, it has approved the construction of over 19,000 new homes. To find the necessary money to provide adequate roads, schools, libraries and similar infrastructure for Beaufort County in general Bluffton, specifically, is going to be a challenge for all of us in the next decade. Bluffton is only an example of why the concept of returning the majority of tax dollars back to the contributing area is neither always logical nor possible. To prepare Beaufort County to meet the demands of future growth, we frequently are going to have to help pay for our neighbor's infrastructure versus expecting to see each tax dollar return to our respective areas.

Editor's Note: A special thanks to Ms. Suzanne Larson, Public Information Officer, for Beaufort County for making sure the statistical data contained in this article was accurate.

Ten Fastest Growing Businesses On Lady's Island:

In 1981, when LIBPA was first organized, Lady's Island had 3120 residents living in 1400 homes and 76 businesses. Today, 24 years later, we are an island of 11,706 residents living in 5086 homes with 400 businesses. Since the establishment of the requirement for business licenses by the county in 2000 we have been able to get a clearer picture of which types of businesses are increasing in number and which types are decreasing. Following is a list of the 10 fastest growing types of businesses on Lady's Island in the last 5 years. The chart shows their present number and the amount they have grown since 2000. They are ranked by the numerical number of businesses increased.

Type of Business	Present #	5 Yr Increase
Contractors/Construction	96	+43
Accountants/Engineers/Lawyers/ etc.	56	+41
Amusement & Recreation Services	13	+11
Misc. Retail	27	+10
Personal Services	20	+7
Eating & Drinking Places	14	+7
Apparel & Accessory Stores	6	+5
Wholesale Trade	6	+5
Security/Brokers/Credit Agencies	10	+4
Auto Repair Garages	7	+4

The only types of businesses that have decreased in number since 2000 are Boat Services/Repair, Furniture and Home Furnishings and Convenience Stores. In each case the decrease consist of a reduction of only 1 business. The numbers speak for themselves – Lady's Island is a good place for businesses.

Editor's Note: A special thank you to Ms Reba Pazant-Hunt, Director of the Beaufort County Business License Department and Ms. Dianne Butler, License Specialist also of the License Department for their assistance and courtesy in providing the annual data regarding business licenses for Lady's Island.