



Lady's Island Business & Professional Association

December 2006 Newsletter

Island Notes:

Thanks Ballenger Realty! Ballenger Realty led by Everett Ballenger, LIBPA member and owner of Ballenger Realty, as part of the Keep America Beautiful Program has adopted the portion of Sams Point Road from the Highway 21/802 intersection to the Brickyard/Sams Point Road intersection. It looks a lot cleaner and is another example of a business making a real contribution to our community. Ballenger Realty also sponsors one of the Sams Point medians.

Highway 21/Highway 802 Connector Road Approved. Beaufort County Council recently approved the route recommended by the engineering firm of Kimley Horn for the Highway 802/Highway 21 connector road (visit the LIBPA web site to see the route) and awarded another contract to Kimley Horn to design the road. Representatives of Kimley Horn have tried very hard to work with both the community and LIBPA on this project and we look forward to continue working with them on the design of the road.

A great example of a well designed family park. As we continue to develop the basic concept for Crystal Lake Park, the playground portion of the new City of Beaufort neighborhood park at Pigeon Point merits a close look as an example of the type we should consider. It is really well designed, safe and very children and family friendly.

Relocation. Allen and Julie Patterson have relocated Patterson Residential LLC from 90 Sams Point Road to 211 Sams Point Road. Allen and Julie specialize in remodeling of existing homes and construction of new homes.

LIBPA To Continue Meeting At Sea Island Conference Center :

After the unexpected closing of Ollie's Restaurant, which for years had been the site of our monthly LIBPA meeting. Marie Lewis offered us the use of her Sea Island Conference Center. Thanks to Marie's personal efforts the Conference Center provided us a great place to hold our monthly meetings with one exception – adequate parking space. As a result of the lack of parking LIBPA's Board of Directors looked at alternate meeting locations and finally selected the meeting hall of Sea Island Presbyterian Church. The plan was to start meeting in the new location in January. However, as those of you that attended the November LIBPA meeting noted Marie has been able to purchase property adjoining the Conference Center and has tripled the amount of parking available. Although the additional property can accommodate the parking she has indicated an intention to have the area turned into a formal parking area.

As a result of the improved parking, the Board of Director's approved continuing to hold our monthly LIBPA meeting at the Sea Island Conference Center. We do sincerely appreciate the willingness of the Sea Island Presbyterian Church to share their facility.

LIBPA Request Connectivity Study:

Representing LIBPA, Jim Hicks, Lady's Island representative on the Beaufort County Planning Commission, recently appeared before the Beaufort County Finance Committee requesting funding be allocated for a "Connectivity Study" of the general area between Meridian Road and Highway 21. The City of Beaufort has contracted for a transportation study to determine possible solutions to traffic problems resulting from the project to build 40 condominium units on Factory Creek at the intersection of Sunset Bluff Boulevard and Highway 21. LIBPA is requesting that the study presently under way by the City be expanded to include a critical look at the impact of not only condominiums but all of the projected developments (White Hall, Boat Busters, Marina). The residential area adjacent to the High School has deteriorated over the years and is presently designated a Redevelopment District which allows high density development. The proposed study would take a close look at future road and sidewalk requirements plus determine how the new Crystal Lake Park will impact the transportation problems in the area. This is not requesting a study that has not been considered before. The need for the study is well documented by the County Transportation Department but did not make the cut of projects to be included in the recent successful 1% sales tax referendum.

As to the source of the money to pay for the requested "Connectivity Study", with the decision to allow the Lady's Island TIF to expire an estimated \$300,000 that had been collected as part of the TIF will revert to the Beaufort County general

fund. The Lady's Island/St Helena Fire District will receive approximately \$100,000 of the reverted funds. As can be seen, there are sufficient remaining TIF funds to pay for the requested study as part of joint City of Beaufort/ Beaufort County effort. The Finance Committee forwarded the request to the full Council recommending approval. County Council approved the request on first reading but final approval will require 3 readings which means it will be at least January 2007 before the final Council vote and the study could be initiated.

Crystal Lake Park And The Estuarium:

Recently from a joint meeting of the Intergovernmental Relations Committee and the Economic Development Committee came a recommended resolution, for County Council consideration, "that action be taken to reserve space in the Master Plan for Crystal Lake Park for an interpretative center. Furthermore, that invitations be issued for organizations to present proposals for the operation of such an interpretive center with specific information describing how such interpretive center might be funded and sustained". The interpretative center, as envisioned by the resolution, would provide an opportunity for people to "learn of the contributions the estuaries, salt and brackish waters, tides and the life forms within these areas make to the quality of life in Beaufort, the Lowcountry of South Carolina, the southeastern coast of the United States and the world". County Council approved a modified version of the resolution in that it recommended the concept of an interpretative center be considered when designing the park.

To locate an Estuarium or Interpretative Center in the Crystal Lake Park certainly deserves serious consideration and evaluation. Crystal Lake contains salt marsh, brackish marsh and a relatively large body of fresh water. It is connected by water to the salt marshes of the Beaufort River and Port Royal Sound, adjoins a major roadway and is centrally located in regard to public and private schools. The resolution specifically notes that although the Center would be located on County property it should not be funded by tax dollars.

LIBPA sponsors the Lady's Island Community Preservation Committee which has taken the lead in establishing the Crystal Lake Park Planning Committee. This Committee includes, in addition to the members of the Community Preservation Committee, Lady's Island representative to the PAL's Board, representatives of the School District, St. Peter's Catholic Church, the Land Planner who is doing the actual planning of the park, a representative of the Beaufort County Planning Department, the Director of Beaufort County Parks and Leisure Services and Councilmen Stewart and Generales.

At this early point in the planning cycle only a conceptual layout of the park has been completed to include a walking path around the lake and agreement that one entrance to the park should be located opposite Hazel Farm Road on Sea Island Drive. Other items presently in the process of being negotiated include the possible purchase of a small piece of property presently owned by St. Peter's Catholic Church which adjoins the lake and obtaining the approval from the School District for use of school property adjoining the lake and possible use of the school parking lot. There is no doubt that the Lady's Island community needs and deserves a park. What else should be included in the park, other than a first rate playground for children? An interpretative center certainly merits serious consideration and study. As is the case with so many aspects of designing the park – the devil is in the details. Hopefully, whatever the final design of the park includes will be based on solid research, planning and the desires of the community.

Tall Power Poles On Brickyard Point Road:

Mr. Tommy Bennett, Lady's Island resident and local manager for the Southern District of SCE&G, recently accepted an invitation from the Lady's Island Community Preservation Committee to review the project presently underway (due for completion in May) to increase the electrical capacity of the electrical transmission lines. Mr. Bennett shared the general details of the project with our members in his article "Trying to Avoid A Crisis" in last month's issue.

The purpose of the November meeting was to insure the community was informed and aware of all aspects of the project. Following are some of the key questions which were answered during the meeting.

What is the specific route of the new transmission lines?

* The new transmission lines will follow the identical route of the present power lines. That is from the end of Colony Gardens Road, down Brickyard Point Road to the intersection of with Middle Road and across to the substation for a total of 18 new, taller poles to replace the existing older wooden poles.

Why are you (SCE&G) buying right of way on property which already has power lines located on it?

* Over the years right of way for power lines was acquired through a variety of methods (mutual agreement, purchase, lease) and the decision was made that the fairest method for the new lines, which use a different style pole and higher capacity transmission lines, was to purchase the right of way.

Why does SGE&G not bury the lines versus using the tall poles?

* Cost! When Sams Point Road was being widened a few years ago the rough planning figure for the cost of burying transmission lines was \$1 million per mile.

Will Lady's Island see another electrical transmission upgrade in the next few years as population growth continues to occur?

* No, at least not in the lifetime of the present residents.

What type of poles will be used for the new lines?

* There are three types of poles, all 85 to 95 feet in height, which could be utilized for the project. They are the (1) the laminated type of poles presently on Sams Point Road, (2) a galvanized steel structure or (3) a weathered steel type of pole which turns brown over time and is presently being used in front of the Bilo Shopping Center in Port Royal. The Community Preservation Committee looked at the choices and unanimously recommended that the weathered steel pole should be utilized for the project. The rationale for the choice is that the weathered steel pole has a smaller "footprint" and blends into the general area/foilage better than the other two choices.

How will these poles stand up to a hurricane?

* They are designed to withstand up to 140 knot winds. The lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina were that power could be restored much quicker with these types of poles than with underground systems.

Editor's Note: We extend a special thanks to Mr. Bennett for his efforts to keep the Lady's Island community informed regarding the project to increase the capacity of the electrical transmission lines and for his willingness to work with LIBPA as together we face the challenges of a rapidly growing community.

A Slow Down In Home Building?:

The National Association of Realtors recently reported that "building permits across the United States showed the slowest pace of annual growth in 9 years. This was attributed to builders trying to curb swelling inventories of unsold new and existing homes".

With this gloomy bit of news a check of the number of building permits issued for Lady's Island appeared in order. As our members know LIBPA checks and publishes the building permitting data for the island on an annual and semi annual basis as a way of gauging the intensity of growth. As of the end of October 2006 there has been 145 building permits issued for construction of single family residences on Lady's Island. At the end of 2005 there were a total of 204 building permits issued for single family home construction. It should be noted this was an all time high. Naturally, there is no way of predicting how many permits will be requested/issued in the last 2 months of 2006 but it seems safe, based on the number issued to date, that it will probably be closer to the 2004 number - which was 185 permits. Whether the building slowdown is due to a weaker real estate market, the homes on Lady's Island becoming too expensive for the general market or less undeveloped available land is a subject open to discussion.

And You Think We Have School Crowding Problems!:

Just when you think that growth is going to overwhelm our area you hear about someone who has it worst. Wake County, North Carolina, which includes Raleigh, saw an increase of 7,500 new students at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. The School District recently received approval from Wake County voters for a \$1 billion bond referendum of which \$970 million is for construction of 17 new schools to be completed by 2008. At the present time the school district has 5,000 more students than they have seats in permanent buildings and are using over 1100 mobile/modular classrooms to cope with the overcrowding. Just to relieve pressure on the high schools, they have established what they call 9th grade centers, in under utilized middle school buildings. These centers teach only the 9th grade (interesting concept).

This information is not intended to make anyone feel better about the overcrowding in Coosa Elementary and Beaufort High School because we are not in as bad a shape as Wake County. It is just a reminder that we need to make some tough decisions, both in zoning and school construction, before we reach a situation similar to Wake County.

Real Estate - Nearing The End Of A Tough Year: by Jerry Marlow, President, Success Plus School Of Real Estate & Broker with Coldwell Banker Keyserling Real Estate

There is no question that the inventory of homes available for sale in the area north of the Broad River has significantly increased in number (+100% on Lady's Island and + 85% in the general area). So a logical question is that with more houses on the market has the price of the median house started to decline. As can be seen by the following chart the simple answer is "no". The general area north of the Broad River has seen a very healthy 12 month increase of about 12% in the median home price.

| MEDIAN PRICE COMPARISON | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| AREA | 2005 | 2006 | % Increase/Decrease |
| Beaufort City | \$175,500 | \$212,500 | 21% |
| Mossy Oaks | \$163,000 | \$165,000 | 1% |
| Port Royal | \$124,700 | \$196,000 | 57% |
| Burton | \$162,000 | \$184,000 | 13% |
| Lady's Island | \$217,850 | \$248,000 | 14% |
| St. Helena | \$195,000 | \$229,950 | 18% |
| Fripp/Harbor Island | \$386,335 | \$502,550 | 30% |
| N of Whale Branch | \$133,000 | \$156,650 | 18% |
| TOTAL | \$209,000 | \$234,000 | 12% |

So if the good news is the selling price of the median home, in the last 12 months, has enjoyed a very healthy increase in price; the bad news is that fewer homes were sold as can be seen by the following data reflecting sales over the last 12 months.

| UNIT SALES COMPARISON | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------|
| AREA | 2005 | 2006 | % Increase/Decrease |
| Beaufort City | 88 | 76 | -14% |
| Mossy Oaks | 102 | 77 | -25% |
| Port Royal | 130 | 94 | -28% |
| Burton | 269 | 247 | -8% |
| Lady's Island | 400 | 319 | -20% |
| St. Helena | 70 | 58 | -17% |
| Fripp/Harbor Island | 214 | 114 | -47% |
| N of Whale Branch | 14 | 22 | +57% |
| TOTAL | 1287 | 1007 | -22% |

Based on the data presented in the above charts, as we near the end of 2006, the real estate picture appears to be that sellers of homes that can find a buyer are still getting a reasonable price. The bad news is there are 20% fewer potential buyers and they have a much greater choice of homes as a result of a larger inventory. It does not mean that your home will not sell or that you won't be able to get a decent price for it. It does mean that if you want that top dollar for your house, it is probably going to stay on the market a good bit longer than it would have 12 months ago. The decision to reduce the selling price to increase the attractiveness of your home in comparison with other homes and possibly reduce the amount of time on the market is always a tough decision and should be made with the help of your realtor.

On behalf of the professional realtors in our area allow me to wish you a happy holiday season and a great New Year.

How Much Rural Land Is Enough?: by Jim Hicks, Lady's Island Planning Commission Representative

What makes northern Beaufort County special? Certainly the answer to this question is in the eyes of each individual but one of the special qualities is the amount of property which still retains a rural or natural appearance. However, when you consider that 9 out of every 10 acres south of the Broad River is committed to some sort of development and north of the Broad River almost 2 out of every 3 acres remains rural it becomes obvious that as a community "we haven't given the farm (or rural nature) away – yet". After looking at some of the problems presently being faced in the area south of the Broad River you come to the conclusion that leaving only 10% of the land rural in nature is too little. So what is the right amount? The truth is we do not have a clue.

When the zoning was being written for Lady's Island, the logic for drawing the boundaries separating the different types of zoning was reasonably straightforward and simple. The first step was to identify and acknowledge the existing land uses followed by the much harder task of predicting future land requirements. Rural zoning was usually defined as property which was either undeveloped or had very limited development and was truly rural in nature. Lady's Island is privileged to have 2 property owners (Dr. Pratt and the Mitchell family) who have chosen to preserve a large portion of their land (694 acres) through conservation easements. These generous acts guaranteed the land would remain rural in nature and not be intensely developed. This property is located in the vicinity of the Ashdale community and the northern part of the island forms an anchor for other surrounding rural property. The northern part of the island was zoned rural because it is in the flight path of aircraft arriving and departing from the Marine Corps Air Station and also an aquifer recharge area is within this area's general boundaries. The following chart provides an idea of how the island is presently zoned today.

| MEDIAN PRICE COMPARISON | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| ZONING | # OF ACRES | % OF TOTAL |
| Village Center | 191 | 1.3% |
| Professional Office District | 113 | 0.8% |
| Expanded Home Business | 147 | 1.0% |
| Community Preservation | 4,032 | 28.0% |
| Planned Unit Development | 2,038 | 14.2% |
| Rural/Rural Residential | 6,522 | 45.3% |
| City of Beaufort | 804 | 5.6% |
| Industrial Park/Landfill | 110 | 0.8% |
| Resource Conservation | 333 | 2.3% |
| Other | 95 | 0.7% |
| TOTAL | 14,385 | 100% |

To provide an idea of how Lady's Island compares with other areas the following chart shows the amount of rural land in each of the other major areas in northern Beaufort County.

| AREA | TOTAL AMT OF LAND | RURAL | % RURAL |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------|
| Sheldon | 70,425 acres | 55,229 acres | 78% |
| Port Royal Island | 33,992 acres | 10,029 acres | 30% |
| St. Helena | 30,855 acres | 22,848 acres | 74% |

Note: The Town of Yemassee is included in the Sheldon area; the City of Beaufort and Town of Port Royal are included in Port Royal Island.

If we accept that the day of large tracts of land being used strictly for agricultural purposes is probably drawing to an end, the next question is how much land should remain zoned rural and for what purpose. The answer to this question depends on who you ask but always includes a discussion of money. We are just now learning, as a result of the "Bluffton" experience, that it must also include consideration of the price of infrastructure to the general tax payer.

So whether we are talking about Lady's Island, Beaufort County or the municipalities, defining where and how much property should be zoned rural is not a simple task and involves conflicting "rights". The rural property owner has a right

to sell his land at a fair value, the rural home owner has a right to continue enjoying the unique benefits of rural life, the developer has a right to request (through the Planned Unit Development process) to develop rural property, the property owner has the right to request his land be annexed into a municipality, the municipality has the right to annex as much as they can and finally the taxpayer has the right to not be burdened with paying for excessive infrastructure as a result of uncontrolled development. So whether it is the individual property owner on Lady's Island requesting his 1 acre be rezoned to allow 2 houses or plantation owners requesting annexation of very large tracts of land into municipalities the questions are the same. How much rural land is enough, where should it be located and once defined - do we have the individual and political will to protect it? This question is being struggled with by both the Lady's Island Community Preservation Committee and those involved with development of the Northern Regional Plan. In the end, we have two choices – (1) find a way to define what should remain rural in the future, justify that decision and take steps to protect the land or (2) admit the problem is too hard and try to regulate the inevitable development.

Editor's Note: A special thanks to Ms. Teri Norris, Beaufort County Planning Department, for providing the data regarding the amount of rural land in northern Beaufort County.

Land Planning Facts: (Living close to the water)

More than half of Americans live within 50 miles of the Atlantic, Pacific, Gulf and Great Lakes coast on just a one fifth of the country's land. (Center for Environment and Population)

(Increase in developed land)

Each American today occupies almost 20% more developed land (housing, schools, and roads) than 20 years ago. By the late 1990's 1.7 acres of land was being developed for every person added to the population. This (1.7 acres) is the equivalent of about 220 parking spaces or 16 basketball courts. (Center for Environment and Population)

What A Great Community!:

The Lady's Island Business and Professional Association was a strong supporter of the Rural and Critical Land and 1% Sales Tax Transportation referendums which were approved by Beaufort County voters in the recent general election. It is well known that LIBPA, as an organization, actively supported both initiatives. The reason for the support was an honest belief by the Board of Directors that passage of both referendums was in the best interest of the Lady's Island, St. Helena, Harbor Island and Hunting Island communities. On the day of the general election, in spite of heavy rain, 54% of all the registered voters in District 7 went to the polls and voted. On Lady's Island 57% of the registered voters showed up at the polls. The voters of District 7 made their voices heard loud and clear with 62% voting in favor of the 1% Sales Tax Transportation Referendum and 72% voting in favor of the Rural and Critical Land Referendum. To those who supported the referendums thank you so much. For those who opposed either one or both of them thank you for voting and letting your opinion be heard. Over the next year(s) LIBPA will work with the various public and private organizations involved in building new roads, bridges and preserving land on Lady's Island. The decision as to funding has been made; now comes the hard part of translating that decision into better roads and preserving the most Beaufort County property possible with the funds available.

Following is a break down of how the voters of District 7 cast their ballots in regard to the 1% Sales Tax Transportation Referendum and the Rural and Critical Land Referendum.

| DISTRICT 7 LOCAL REFERENDUM VOTING RESULTS | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|-----|------------------|
| DISTRICT 7 PRECINCT | REGISTERED VOTERS | 1% Sales Tax Referendum | | Rural/Critical Land Referendum | | Voter Turnout |
| | | YES | NO | YES | NO | |
| LADY'S ISLAND | | | | | | |
| 1A | 1109 | 287 | 204 | 317 | 173 | 511 |
| 2A | 1074 | 316 | 174 | 361 | 127 | 522 |
| 3A | 1265 | 351 | 250 | 417 | 191 | 634 |
| 1B | 1027 | 325 | 184 | 382 | 131 | 537 |
| 2B | 901 | 544 | 316 | 610 | 254 | 896 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 3B | 835 | 295 | 145 | 314 | 100 | 427 |
| ST. HELENA | | | | | | |
| 2A | 881 | 162 | 172 | 215 | 115 | 351 |
| 1C | 1346 | 508 | 275 | 652 | 134 | 820 |
| BEAUFORT | | | | | | |
| 2 | 986 | 203 | 145 | 277 | 99 | 401 |
| TOTAL | 9424 | 2991(62%) | 1865 | 3542(72%) | 1324 | 5099 (54%) |

The following information shows the general location of each District 7's voting precincts.

Lady's island 1A – East side of Sams Point Road and Lucy Creek

Lady's Island 2A – West side of Sams Point Road

Lady's Island 3A – Pleasant Point and Goat Island

Lady's Island 1B – Cat Island, Burkmyer, Eustis and Lady's Island Airport

Lady's Island 2B – Sams Point, Coosa Island

Lady's Island 3B – Factory Creek

St. Helena 2a - North Highway 21, Coffin Point and Eddings Point

St. Helena 1C – Dataw Island and Frogmore

Beaufort 2 – Pigeon Point (Note: Only 87 of total registered voters in Beaufort 2 are in District 7)

Highway 21/Sea Island Parkway Project Status: by Greg Cook, Regional Manager, U. S. Group

After the very positive experience with our widening of Sams Point Road and the replacement of the bridge to Hunting Island, we at U. S. Group are pleased to be able to continue our professional relationship with the residents of Lady's, St. Helena, and Dataw Islands. At this early stage of the project, our work to widen portions of Highway 21 on St. Helena Island is exactly where the first phase of the Sams Point road project began, with early work focusing upon the clearing of right of way, relocation of utility lines and planning all of the many details essential to insuring the project is a team effort between our company, the county, the state and members of the effected communities.

This coordination and preliminary work is not anticipated to cause any disruption of traffic, during the December holiday period, and our present plans are for the actual construction work on the road to begin in the late January or early February time frame. Even then, daytime lane closures are not allowed, and we will work to reduce any other traffic impacts our work may have.

We appreciate the offer extended by our friends with LIBPA to once again allow us to publish a monthly project update in your newsletter and web site to help better inform you, our "customers", about the Highway 21/Sea Island Parkway project. As before, we've also provided a web site at www.SealIslandParkway.com to provide you with the latest information regarding the project.

On behalf of the members of U. S. Group and their families please accept our best wishes for a very happy holiday season and New Year during which, as together we work to improve the travel on Sea Island Parkway, we look forward to continuing to be a good neighbor.

We are glad to be back in your community.

Editor's Note: U. S. Group is the company that did such a great job on widening Sams Point Road and working with the Lady's Island community that LIBPA awarded them the 2004 Community Spirit Award.

The Election Is Over!:

The election is over, the political signs removed (most of them) and we in LIBPA would like to take this opportunity to express our congratulations to the winners and our appreciation to all of the candidates for not only being willing to serve in public office but for keeping the campaigns focused on the issues. Also, we thank Mark Generales for his 8 years of service to the Lady's Island (District 7) community as our county council representative and Rich Trischler for his efforts on the school board.

Next year will involve many challenges to our community and our county. We, in LIBPA, look forward to working with LIBPA members Paul Sommerville and Jim Bequette in their new roles as councilman and schoolboard representative to determine solutions to these challenges.

It Was My Privilege To Serve Lady's Island - Thank you: by Mark Generales, Lady's Island County Council Representative

I'm often asked these days what I'm doing with all the time I have since I am no longer on County Council. I remind folks I don't leave office until January and my Council agenda is very full. Council still absorbs the normal 20 to 40 hours of my time each week. Hopefully, that will be replaced with family and work and leisure pursuits that have been sacrificed for the past 8 years. But before I go, please allow me to share a few lessons I have learned as a member of Council and as I close, a few memories, thank you's and projections.

The manner in which our local government functions is not well understood by many. Truly, few elected officials change much from the people they were before being elected. But their views and actions are forcibly shaped by a reality they were ignorant of prior to being in office. That is why campaign promises often are hollow and quickly forgotten.

Notably, the permanent staff has been there long before anyone first takes office. They will remain there long after any elected official leaves. Staff alone implements the work of government. Their views count and their manner of work can make or break the very policies elected officials fashion. Woe is the ignorant, newly elected official that fails to understand this basic fact of government life.

The diversity on this Council is significant. We are made up of two women, 9 men, four African-Americans, 7 Caucasians, 7 retired folks and 4 fully employed. Of this group, 5 are native to South Carolina and 6 are from California to Missouri to New Jersey. No one controls this group. Often, quiet private conversations, usually one-on-one between Council members, work to iron out differences. But the key is that without 6 votes, you can forget any action. Positions are modified often to accommodate each other in the process of dealing with issues. So while 80% of the time votes are unanimous – without compromise, nothing gets done.

Invariably, inaccurate pieces of information are promoted during campaigns and there were several of those this past primary. Perhaps the most unfortunate one had to do with the financial condition of the County. The County is, by any measure, in very good financial shape. Standard and Poor's, Moody's, Fitch and others rate us a AA- and the only way our County can be rated higher is to more fully diversify our economic base. That can't occur with our current zoning. Our County has a healthy fund balance. And we have done a good job of keeping debt in line.

But as that one piece of campaign literature suggested, our bond indebtedness has expanded during my time in office. Why and where did the money go? What projects were paid for and completed during my terms in office?

I leave office with two brand new college campus' having been built and now in full operation – the new campus of both USC and the Technical College. Property around Crystal Lake was purchased and is being developed as Lady's Islands core park, the Bluffton parkway was built, significant improvements were made at Burton Well's Park, many boat landings, the Hilton Head Library, Bluffton Library, Dale Library, a planned and funded St. Helena Library were improved, newly built or are in design and funding stages. Housing for DSS patients, new facilities for staff, drop off centers, radio towers, and a new Emergency Management Center in Ridgeland, have been created.

I am particularly proud of the comprehensive marketing program created to cover the entire county that has all three of our County's Chambers working together for the first time. County Council even provided \$1.5 million to the City of Beaufort for reconstruction of their Waterfront Park – the list is extensive and goes on and on. The money that has been spent was not squandered and in all cases – improves the lives of the residents and businesses in our County. You can see examples of this everywhere you look today in our County.

Meanwhile, we worked with the state on various projects that include Highway 21 on Lady's Island improved, Sam's Point Road widened, 3 lanes on Highway 278 in Bluffton today, Highway 170 widened, and now Highway 21 on St. Helena.

My last piece of important legislation, if all goes well, is the introduction of a long overdue non-smoking ordinance that applies in the unincorporated County and hopefully will serve as the impetus for similar ordinances in our municipalities.

Additionally, recent election results have made the new Council's work much lighter. Voters approved Council's effort to provide a fully funded Critical Lands program. I am proud to have created the first bond referendum. With 10,000 acres already purchased and the new infusion of \$50 million, the program will be healthy for the next four years.

Equally important is the road referendum approved and funded via the one cent sales tax. The current Council did the heavy lifting on this and the new Council will have a significant leg up on this critical issue. Their job will be to ensure the roads get built on time, within budget and without error.

The new Council will be challenged in dealing with sub-standard County government wages and commensurate productivity. This is a definite "chicken and egg" dilemma. How the new members deal with this situation with staff will be most interesting – especially given campaign claims that focused on supposed financial over- expenditures and supposed over-staffing at the County.

Let me turn to a partial list of people I need to thank for assisting me over the past 8 years: From elected officials to Party members to my family and friends – so many. Larry Hughes who has been a friend and confidant, whose help, assistance and friendship has been immeasurable. Jim Hicks whose guidance and counsel remain a blessing. Larry Rowland, with background, and an intuitive feel beyond compare. Dan Lynch for all he has done for me. All the wonderful friends I have gained in Dataw – from Bob Holzmacher to Jim Goettle and Bob Tish who helped so much these past two campaigns to Pat Conners and Bernie Creegan and Cam Bailey and so many more who have helped over the years.

At the County, Buzz Boehm, Tony Criscitiello, William Winn, Frank Guth and Sue Rainey – this list is far too long. I count among friends and supporters John Kachmar whose plain talk and knowledge were too much for many people yet provided the first professional manager this County had ever seen and Gary Kubic who has taken the reins and gives so much every day. I have served with and thank many – from Marvin Dukes to Peter Lamb to Weston Newton. We are blessed to have so many qualified people with wonderful backgrounds willing to serve.

As the new Council moves into the New Year, a couple of predictions:

2007 is the year of the Comp Plan re-write. A restrictive plan as desired and aggressively sought by the environmental activists among us will fail in the long run. Annexations out of County jurisdiction to avoid provisions of a restrictive plan will mirror those in southern Beaufort County. It will strengthen the hand of municipalities and in time – the County will have a little to do with land management. The new Council will struggle with this, as they should. It is the key to the County's future.

Meanwhile a new jail must be built, County wage scales revised upward across the board, the County buildings improved greatly and constant upgrading of law enforcement, and so many other services. Will the Hilton Head Airport remain in operation as a commercial airport? Not as it currently stands. I could fill another 10 pages with this list.

In the end, I wish Mr. Somerville well in his first year. It is a steep learning curve and the only way to gain the knowledge is to put in the time. I hope he fulfills his campaign pledge to be "for Lady's Island interest". With the inherent conflicts that arise from annexation of County property on Lady's Island, I pray the contrasting needs of the City of Beaufort do not reduce our Island needs to a secondary position. However, while Mr. Somerville and I may disagree on some subjects, I believe that both of us want the best future possible for Lady's Island and Beaufort County. I am pleased to offer Paul any assistance he may need in fulfilling his duties over the next 4 years.

As I close, to all of you – my heartfelt appreciation for allowing me the opportunity to participate and in my own small way – have some positive impact on our community and your family's lives. If I can ever be of help, please do not hesitate to call on me.