

For Our Longer Lives

By Kathy Werle

Looking back and looking ahead—a round table

We are fortunate to live in and be a part of a community of concerned, proactive, involved citizens. The May forum, sponsored by the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee, brought many of our treasured neighbors to a round table at town hall to discuss what they cherish most about the town, what has been important to them when they look back on their lives in Pine Knoll Shores and what their concerns and hopes are for the future. The forum, facilitated by Joan Lamson, presented an informal setting for attendees to hear a bit of town lore and what has been of special interest to each of them, to share what brought them to our island paradise and to exchange their ideas on future growth and development.

When attendees were asked what drew them to Pine Knoll Shores, we heard many rich stories of the search process in discovering our unique town. There were those who vacationed up and down our coast and found nothing to compare with what our town offers. The search for one attendee encompassed a coast-to-coast search for the perfect place to retire. It was no surprise to hear that many of the attendees had visited a friend or vacationed here and just didn't want to leave—or perhaps promised themselves they would return at retirement.

Do you remember the old swing bridge? One participant recalled an early visit when that was your entrance to the island, and for her, seeing Pine Knoll Shores, it was love at first sight. Another participant visited a friend here in 1958 and mentioned spending time at the Salter Path Campground in the 1960s (sounds like more fun than I was having in the 1960s when I was sitting on the shores of Lake Superior thinking there had to be a warmer place to live).

All had done their homework, although at least one attendee found Pine Knoll Shores “by accident after making a left turn.” Everyone agreed: they have not regretted nor been disappointed with their decision to extend their two-week vacation into a lifetime, several having lived here more than 30 years.

Participants at our round table shared their appreciation for the volunteerism that enables our town to run smoothly while keeping our tax rate relatively low. The number of citizens who pitched in to help with the massive cleanup after Hurricane Florence is just one example of the dedication to our town values. Several of the attendees serve on various boards and committees, such as the Strategic Planning Committee, the Planning Board, the History Committee, the Community Appearance Commission and the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee. Also mentioned was the added value of other groups, such as the Garden Club members who beautify our common areas, the Parks and Recreation Committee (PARC) that creates all the fun events we enjoy year round and the HOAs that maintain our parks and marinas. Integrated society was a term used as we come together as volunteers. Volunteerism provides the basis for a real sense of community and lends itself to a commitment to be good stewards of our fragile and unique environment.

Peering into the crystal ball, the number one concern of many seemed to be the anticipated impact Interstate 42 will have on our area, and caution was deemed to be critical. As with any dramatic change that eases across our radar, the building of I-42 may bring certain headaches as well as opportunities. The greatest impact will be in the Newport/Morehead City corridor—but the island will not be immune, and there was a determination by some participants that the town not cave to outside pressure to change what we have and who we are. Someone said, “We must have the stamina and backbone to persevere.” Will there be additional strain put on our septic systems and roads as they struggle to handle increased development and redevelopment? No doubt; however, one participant pointed out that along with perceived negatives there will be positive changes, such as the arrival of a higher level of technology allowing homeowners to work from home, perfect for some second-home owners who want to spend more time here, and an increase in real

estate property values. We have the tools in our town code to manage development and confidence in our talented, dedicated members on various boards and committees to help guide the ship.

Expanding further on possible upcoming changes, one participant asked how we maintain what the majority of current homeowners want when the new people arrive. Well, we were all new people at one time, so maybe it is just a matter of education, patience, time and SISU. Anyone who has seen my SISU license plate and asked about its origin has heard what that word represents. The Finnish people use SISU to indicate courage, perseverance, determination, tenacity, mettle and persistence. We are reminded of the importance of SISU as we strive every day to protect the fragile maritime forest bequeathed to us by Alice Hoffman.

There was mention of the desire to increase the involvement of second-home owners in town activities, giving them the opportunity to share in all that makes our community the special place it is. It is the town's hope, of course, that today's second-home owners will become tomorrow's year-round residents as has happened in the past.

We were pleased to receive positive feedback on our round-table format and were encouraged to hold others in the future. There is value to and interest in bringing all homeowners together frequently to exchange ideas, share concerns, learn more about each other and plan for the future. One participant said such oral surveys can become a guide for our vision.

The Age-Friendly Advisory Committee is grateful for the many participants who attended our forum and shared what they saw when they looked back and what they see looking ahead. The common thread is the love and appreciation for this incredible town, its natural beauty, its people, its past and its future.

Suggestions for future forums may be submitted to Sarah Williams at town hall at SWilliams@townofpks.com, by calling 247-4353, ext. 13, or by coming to our next third Thursday advisory meeting, which will be held in September after our summer break. As always, we are searching for topics of interest to our citizens for future forums and welcome your suggestions as we all continue growing healthier, smarter and more informed together.

PIKSCO Happenings

By Gary Corsmeier

Garner Park is a happening place. Last fall I wrote that, once the hurricane cleanup and improvements were completed, you wouldn't know there had been a hurricane—and now the park is better than it ever was. Last month we hosted the Kayak for the Warriors race, and the park and the weather were perfect. Garner Park is an ideal place for this event—easy access for launching kayaks, plenty of room for the tents and a covered picnic area for the food. What a great event.

The next event is the Fourth of July parade, which starts and ends at Garner Park, followed by watermelon and sweets at the shelter. With the increased number of golf carts in the community, many families are now entering the parade with their decorated cart. Again, the facilities along with the circular drive work well for this.

Have you noticed the flags at McNeill Park? Of course, Old Glory always flies from the main staff, but the yardarm now has the US military flags. Our “flag man” suggested that we fly the flags for each branch of the military. To achieve that, two flags are flown for a week and then two different ones are hoisted. What a great way to recognize our military and honor those who served.

Our annual HOA meeting will be at 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, July 20, at McNeill Park. We will have a short business meeting and election of officers, followed by a hotdog supper. This is a great way to meet your board members and socialize with your neighbors.

PIKSCO contact. For questions, concerns or to volunteer, contact PIKSCO by phone at 252-247-4818, email at piksco@gmail.com, through our website at piksco.com or by mail at P.O. Box 366, Atlantic Beach, NC 28512.