

# Joan Lamson, 1937-2021

By Brian Kramer

In May we lost former Mayor Joan Lamson. Joan was a wonderful person, a talented and driven businesswoman, and a leader in many circles within Carteret County. Those who knew her know this, and her major accomplishments in Pine Knoll Shores have been chronicled in Kathy Werle's article at right and in the profile of Joan in the September 2020 edition of *The Shoreline*. I'll take this opportunity to talk about some of the things she did behind the scenes while mayor. Some were big, others not so big. Some worked, and some didn't. The point isn't just to describe what she did or tried to do. It's more of a testimony to how Joan was always trying to do what she believed was best for the town. She was a supreme organizer and gatherer of people and ideas. While some of these may seem insignificant, I believe she helped shape our small local government as it operates today.

Joan took office in 2003 during a transitional period for Pine Knoll Shores. We had recently assumed a significant amount of debt for a beach bond, had just purchased a second town facility (the public safety building) and assumed significant debt for that, and were transitioning our fire and EMS departments from a volunteer to a paid staff. The town needed to find six additional public beach accesses to remain compliant with the federal government, and we assumed additional significant debt with the purchase of the water company. The town had years earlier considered and decided not to switch from a mayor-council form of government to a council-manager framework. The switch in 2006-2007 was probably the most consequential move she made in terms of the way the town operates. Forgetting names and faces for a minute, I think Joan simply recognized that to manage finances and have the town move forward, it was time.

Joan wrote a "rules of procedures" book for the Board of Commissioners. This outlined the new rules for the board in the new form of government. I remember it well, mainly because it went over like a lead balloon with the board. I am honestly not sure how much it was referenced, but just its creation was classic organizational Joan.

Joan and the Planning Board accomplished a complete rewrite of the town's Land Use Plan, which spells out policies and actions related to the town's compliance with CAMA, but, more importantly, lists town policies on development, protection of the natural environment and other town positions. The re-write wasn't anything new; we had done that before. The difference is what we do with the Plan. Today, when the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners adopt changes to the zoning chapter of the Town Code, we cite compliance with this Land Use Plan. We did not do this in times past, and I think Joan's involvement helped create a process so that when we take action related to land use, we do it within some type of framework.

We have a Cash Management Plan in existence today that has Joan's handprints all over it. It outlines everything from how we do bank deposits to how we invest our town funds. We have modified it frequently over the years, and every time we do this, I remember Joan's telling me when I first arrived how important it is.

She hired a firm to redesign the town's website. I hated that website, most people I spoke to hated it, and Joan thought it was the most beautiful thing ever created. She sat me down in her office and showed me how "easy" it was to maneuver through (it wasn't), how user friendly it was (it absolutely was not), and how easy

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# A Legacy of Caring

By Kathy Werle

## Making the town a place for all

How would you describe a sunset over Bogue Sound, a rainbow after a spring shower, the profound thrill Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" brings to the soul, or a hummingbird beating its wings 60-80 beats per second as it flies 500 miles solo nonstop to its winter (or summer) home?

How can I put words to a friend and associate who was bigger than life? Since Joan Lamson's passing, I have spent hours thinking of how she enriched my life and how her significant civic contributions created the Pine Knoll Shores we know and love today.

Joan was passionate about making things better for the town's aging population, especially in housing. She saw so many of the town's elderly moving off the island when the homes they built in the '70s and '80s were no longer of a suitable design to allow them to age in place safely. Joan's vision for Pine Knoll Shores was a neighborhood that would provide housing options featuring design elements geared to stem the tide of those feeling the need to leave.

When she founded our Aging-in-Place Committee in 2015, later renamed Age-Friendly Community (AFC) Advisory Committee I was eager to sign on to this very worthy endeavor, along with 26 others. Joan had found livability guidelines for aging-in-place communities through the World Health Organization, and the committee began its study of the eight domains of community life that influence the health and quality of life of a town's residents.

Focusing primarily on housing, health services and social interaction, the committee got to work analyzing what is required and evaluating how Pine Knoll Shores measured up. We met monthly to share our findings, and during those meetings, Joan demonstrated her tremendous leadership skills and business acumen while pulling all members together into meaningful discussions and extracting the best from everyone. She was insightful, perceptive, decisive and respectful of everyone's ideas—and worked tirelessly bringing people together to solve problems.

After the careful analysis and in-depth discussions of the eight domains, Joan began drawing on her vast network of local experts to join us in monthly forums. She brought in knowledgeable speakers who shared their expertise, providing critical information on timely topics relevant to our aging population as we all strove to be more informed and live smarter, healthier and longer lives.

I was privileged to work closely with Joan on the AFC Advisory Committee for six years and watched a master at work. If you were one of the fortunate who attended these forums or read my monthly wrap-up articles in *The Shoreline*, Joan was grateful. She cared so very much for the well-being of the town's OPALs (older people with active lifestyles).

Joan was an innovator. Realizing we were not reaching everyone, she suggested throwing a birthday party for all those nonagenarians in Pine Knoll Shores who had reached the magic number of 90. We served birthday cake, cookies, coffee and fermented grapes. It was a gala event appreciated by those who sometimes felt excluded.

Socialization has been shown in many studies to be critical to avoid isolation, which can be a killer. People tend to become more isolated as they age. They

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