

Tacks in the Road

By Mayor John Brodman

My two-cents worth

Beware the Ides of March. “I came, I saw, I conquered.” Julius Caesar should have seen it coming. In spite of Caesar’s fate in the Roman Senate, March does have some frivolity, beginning with Fat Tuesday (Mardi Gras) on March 1. Daylight saving time starts on March 13 and, of course, we can’t miss St. Paddy’s Day on March 17. March on the island is also packed with the business of local government. Here in Pine Knoll Shores, we are back in the thick of things, following the Board of Commissioners’ annual brainstorming retreat and kickoff of our FY2022-23 budget deliberations. The mayor and commissioners had very productive discussions with the members of our citizen boards and committees and with the town department heads. A few of the key outcomes from that meeting are discussed below.

COVID update. As we enter year three of the virus, COVID is an ever-present part of our daily lives. The Board of Commissioners (BOC) reviewed our policies regarding public access to town hall and participation in town business meetings. Since most people are accepting responsibility for the health and safety of themselves and others, the BOC decided to reopen town hall and the public safety building to the public for walk-ins. However, for efficiency reasons, we are still encouraging those who wish to meet with staff on particular issues to call ahead and make an appointment. We hope to resume public participation in town government meetings in March, but space may be limited. The decision on when to open town hall to outside groups (e.g., Garden Club, Women’s Club and HOAs) will be revisited in March.

Public outreach/comment. As our latest sidewalk survey clearly shows, there is a lot of interest on all sides of the sidewalk debate. As a result, the BOC decided to schedule a “town hall” type meeting to give everyone an opportunity to air their views and have an open discussion. The meeting will take place on March 14 at 5 p.m. Watch your town email for more information.

Along the same lines, the BOC decided to begin its regular monthly board meetings with an open caucus, beginning at 5:30 p.m. and ending promptly at 6 p.m., when we will begin our regular monthly business meeting. The idea here is to give people a chance to come and raise issues or questions with the mayor and commissioners in a somewhat less structured, less formal setting that promotes back-and-forth dialogue and open communications. In both of these instances (town hall and caucus), we will be developing some practical ground rules, and we ask that you respect the process, and your fellow citizens, by being reasonable and not monopolizing the time available.

We will continue to have two public comment periods at the beginning and end of each regular board meeting, where comments, presented in person, online, or sent in ahead of time for the town clerk to read, will be limited to three minutes each. The BOC will try to respond on the spot if the issue can readily be resolved. Beginning at the regular board meeting on March 9, we will be reserving the first public comment period (at the beginning of the meeting) for issues pertaining only to items on the formal agenda for that day’s meeting. The second public comment period (at the end of the meeting) will be open to any issue. Please be reasonable and practical; for example, if you raise an issue dur-

In Memoriam

Robert Norman Beattie

Fred Brown

Bob Curry

Myrtle Gault

Connie Parker

James Rose

ing the caucus, there is no reason to repeat it during the formal public comment period(s). Others may want to speak as well. Thank you.

Sidewalk update. We have been receiving many comments and questions about sidewalks over the past month and, given the level of interest, I thought I would share them with the readers of *The Shoreline*. The issues frequently raised by many are in bold type, and the counter points (CP), also frequently raised by many, are presented immediately below each issue in regular type.

1. Why do we need sidewalks on the (north/south) side of Highway 58 in Pine Knoll Shores?

CP: For pedestrian safety, connectivity, convenience, fresh air and exercise. We share this island with the other towns on Bogue Banks. We cooperate locally with them on Fire/Police/EMS issues, on material and equipment purchases/sharing, and on issues of common concern to Bogue Banks. We have few commercial enterprises in Pine Knoll Shores, and we depend on our neighbors (AB, EI, and MHC) to provide these services. Many people in Pine Knoll Shores walk to the Dollar General, the post office and Atlantic Station.

2. Everyone’s property tax will increase to pay for this expenditure. We are in the midst of a county-wide real estate revaluation. Our new taxes will reflect current value and the “sidewalk tax” will add to our expected higher property taxes.

CP: Under our “revenue-neutral” tax regime, with ceteris paribus conditions, your property taxes will increase after revaluation if the assessed value of your property goes up more in percentage terms than the average increase in value for the town as a whole. If the increase in your property’s value is less than the town-wide average, your taxes will go down. The estimated annual tax increase to pay for sidewalks, for a house with an assessed value of \$500,000, is the equivalent of the price of 10 glasses of house wine at Table 9.

3. Does Beacon’s Reach, representing the western portion of Pine Knoll Shores, actually want a public sidewalk in addition to their existing private sidewalk along Highway 58 that is currently hidden from public view?

CP: Many people in Beacon’s Reach have expressed an interest in safe pedestrian links with the rest of the town.

4. We don’t want Pine Knoll Shores to become another Myrtle Beach (or pick another example).

CP: Installing sidewalks to improve pedestrian safety and connectivity does not make you another Myrtle Beach. A sidewalk is not a gateway drug that inexorably sends you down the path of chaotic over-development. We have our own land use plan, zoning districts and building codes and ordinances to protect us.

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