



THE STARS AND STRIPES COME HOME TO HHI

In a special ceremony, Re/Max, Hilton Head hosted a flag raising at its Main Street offices. Singing “God Bless America,” agents watched as American Legion members Don Shea (left) and Lee Polhill (right) raised a flag that had previously

PHOTO BY GERALD WEAVER

flown over the United States chancery in the “Green Zone” in Baghdad, Iraq.

Month in REVIEW

Lowcountry NEWS

A look back at March, from 278 traffic woes to new measures protecting our beaches.

\$43.7 MILLION SCHOOL REFERENDUM TO GO BEFORE VOTERS IN MAY

With a wide range of projects needed to improve area schools, the Beaufort County Board of Education has finalized a wide-reaching \$43.7 million referendum that will go before voters in Beaufort County on May 20th. Initially, the Board approved a referendum for \$146.5 million by a narrow margin of 6-5. Realizing that such a close vote would hardly inspire voters to follow suit, the Board then slashed over \$100 million from the referendum, paring it down to a mere \$43.7 million. The new referendum is viewed by some as a mere stopgap, but it will fund a new elementary and middle school in Bluffton, as well as land acquisition and construction of a new high school north of the broad.

ARTS CENTER OF COASTAL CAROLINA TO RECEIVE STATEWIDE RECOGNITION

The Arts Center of Coastal Carolina, long recognized by locals for its outstanding performances and dedication to the arts, has now received an award of high recognition by the South Carolina Arts Commission. In a special ceremony at the Statehouse in May, the Arts Center will officially be given the Elizabeth O’Neill Verner Award designating it the top arts organization in the state for 2006. The award is the highest honor given by the commission, and the Arts Center of Coastal Carolina was chosen due to the high quality of its programming, its outreach and community service programs, and its cultural impact on the area.

FORMER COUNTY ASSESSOR SUES BEAUFORT COUNTY FOR \$10 MILLION

Bernice Wright, former Beaufort County assessor, has brought charges against Beaufort County, claiming \$10 million in damages. After a county audit and two state investigations into her office, Wright retired in January of 2005. The investigations exonerated Wright of charges that she had given tax breaks to family members, but Wright claims that fallout from the investigations damaged her character and caused her resignation under duress.

INCREASED TRAFFIC ON U.S. 278 ATTRACTS SHERIFF’S ATTENTION

Thousands of motorists were caught in the snarl of traffic heading onto the island each morning and off each evening, as new signal equipment was installed at nine intersections along U.S. 278. Sheriff P.J. Tanner, seeing how bad traffic was getting, urged officials at the State Department of Transportation to adopt a timing plan created by Darrin Shoemaker, Hilton Head Island’s traffic engineer. State officials were optimistic that they could implement the plan before the Verizon Heritage brings even more traffic to the already congested road.

YOUR PLACE OR MINE?

Residents of Woodlake Villas on Mathews Drive received a surprise last month when it was revealed that a clerical error more than 20 years ago has caused deeds for several units within the complex to become swapped. Nearly 36 units were affected by the glitch, which has caused some owners’ mortgages to be secured by a different unit.

Drawn to the NEWS



ILLUSTRATION BY MATT ANDERSON

TOWN GETS BALL ROLLING ON CREATING AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN

As part of an effort to revamp current affordable housing plans which the town deemed unworkable, town planners have created a new set of standards that are receiving a mix of reactions from developers and Hilton Head residents. The plan received its first formal endorsement from the town last month, albeit with stipulations. The plan allows developers to build up to 12 homes beyond what they can currently build in an area as long as half are priced for “medium income” households (those with an income less than 120 percent of the county’s median income). The town modified the plan somewhat by including rent-to-own housing, but controversy still lingered over the stipulation that homes built under the program continue to have price limits for thirty years.

VACATION RENTAL LICENSE LAW STALLS

Facing mounting criticism, town officials dropped plans to expand standing business license laws to include all vacation rentals on the island. The plan originally stated that anyone renting out their property short-term, even through a rental agency, would have been required by law to acquire a business license from the town. Currently, only those who rent out five or more units are required to file for a business license with the town. Town officials still plan on addressing the issue, but admit that they need to gather information and fine-tune the plan before making it law.

TOWN ACTS TO PROTECT FOREST BEACH DUNES FROM DEVELOPMENT

The dunes that run along Forest Beach are not only a picturesque reminder of Hilton Head Island’s natural beauty, they are also vital to the survival of our beaches, creating a habitat for native vegetation and animals and protecting lands further inland from storm surge. Because of this, town officials have been doubling efforts to pass a law preventing development of any kind along the dunes in the Forest Beach area. While the state maintains a certain setback from the beach, that line ends generally where the dunes begin and it has generally been acceptable practice that developers would keep off the dunes altogether. Recently, however, the Adventure Inn submitted plans to the town to construct a new building as well as a pool and recreation areas in the dunes on its property. As of press time, a final decision on the new measure had not been made.

Statewide NEWS

DANIEL ISLAND TRACT TO BE SOLD OFF FOR GREEN SPACE

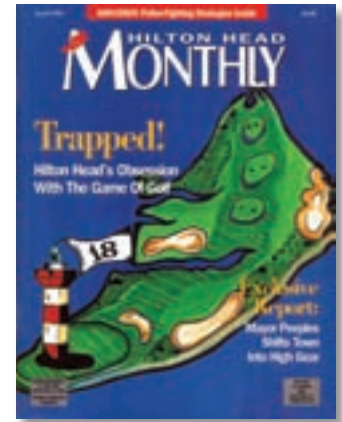
At a public meeting in Charleston, Gov. Mark Sanford addressed a crowd of about 150 on plans for 1,300 acres of state-owned land on Daniel Island, the last undeveloped tract in Charleston Harbor. Originally purchased for use as a steamship terminal, the land now sits undeveloped. Sanford, however, advocated using the land for green space and public water access. The population of Charleston is growing exponentially, he argued, and decades down the road green space will be at a premium.

BRIDGES AND DEVELOPMENT ON SEA ISLANDS CALLED INTO QUESTION

Current regulations on bridge building to smaller barrier islands have some home owners frustrated as they struggle to get to the land they own. Current statutes, designed to keep developers from over-building some of the 3,400 small marsh islands along the coast, have kept some owners from building bridges to their own land. When the South Carolina Supreme Court shot down a proposed rule last year regulating development on smaller islands, the state Department of Health and Environmental Control formed an emergency committee to form a stopgap rule until a law could be fully formed. The committee, formed of developers, state officials and conservationists, was able to create a set of rules, but by all accounts it was a compromise none were happy with, and these statutes may be allowed to expire.

STATE REP FILES BILLS TO STRENGTHEN STATE FOIA LAWS

In recognition of “Sunshine Week,” the national celebration of the Freedom of Information Act, and in response to questioning from various media outlets, Rep. Phil Sinclair, R-Spartanburg, filed four bills that would strengthen the public’s ability to get information on government meetings and institutions. The first targeted so-called “chance meetings” that public officials can use to skirt FOIA laws, another required an affidavit be signed when public officials close meetings, a third set a cap on how much government agencies can charge for copying costs, and the fourth one shortened the time that public agencies can respond to a Freedom of Information Act request, a period of time currently set at fifteen days. **M**



Ten years ago in *Monthly*: The Heritage was, naturally, center stage in our April 1996 issue. To anyone confused about the recent name change the tournament underwent, keep in mind that at this point it was called the unwieldy “MCI Classic - The Heritage of Golf.” We also checked in with new mayor Tom Peoples to get his thoughts on the State of the Town and the progress he and town council had made.