

Daufuskie Island Council Meeting

December 17, 2019 - 6:00 PM

Mary Field School

Call to Order: Council Co-Chair John Schartner called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with a quorum of members present

Roll Call:

Present: John Schartner, Leanne Coulter, Steve Hill, Robert Levis

Absent: Roger Pinckney, Sallie Ann Robinson

Pledge of Allegiance

General Announcements:

- Leanne provided a summary of information on the proposed merger of Daufuskie Fire Department with Bluffton Fire Department. She had recent conversations on the subject with Geoff Brunning (Chairman of Daufuskie Fire District), Mark Lawson (Beaufort County Council), Ashley Jacobs (Beaufort County Administrator), and Eddie Boys (Chief, Daufuskie Fire Department).
 - The consolidation of the fire departments is an initiative brought forward by the BC Administrator to reduce property taxed and to improve efficiency.
 - The County is in very preliminary discussions regarding the consolidation. It must be a win-win situation for both communities.
 - Topic has been discussed numerous times in the past ~20 years.
 - The County has hired law firm Pope- Flynn from Columbia. The company specializes in fire department consolidations.
 - From the preliminary discussions, here are some of the perceived benefits and disadvantages:
 - Benefits:
 1. Property taxes for DI residents would be reduced.
 2. Fire impact fees for new construction would be reduced.
 3. Fire insurance premiums should stay the same.
 4. DI firefighters would have more training, therefore receive more pay.
 5. Firefighters would need to have EMT certification.
 6. DI firefighters may have lower health care cost. The average age of Bluffton firefighters is younger than on DI.
 7. The departments would rotate some equipment, which would result in some newer equipment for DI.
 8. When a DI firefighter is sick, there would be a pool of firefighters to fill-in.
 - Disadvantages:
 1. The community might lose the perceived feeling of having their own fire department; however, we would still have firefighters that serve DI.

- 2. Currently, the work shift for Bluffton firefighters is: 24 hours on - 48 hours off. The work shift for DI firefighters is: 48 hours on - 96 hours off. This might need to change.
 - Additional comments: The County is looking to see if this is something that would be a possibility. The responsibility of the law firm, Pope-Flynn with the County attorney is to see if the consolidation would be possible. If the consolidation would be possible, they would send a report to the County. The County administration, finance and legal departments would begin to have meetings. Then, public meetings in both communities would then occur. Everyone I spoke with indicated we are at a very preliminary point in looking at the issue. There is no reason to have meetings until many questions are answered. Chief Eddie and Geoff Brunning, the Chairman of the Fire District, said they would never recommend anything for the DI Fire Department unless there would be a benefit to the taxpayers and residents of the island.
- Steve Hill provided information on the upcoming 2020 DI Council election.
 - The 2020 Daufuskie Island Council election will be Saturday, February 8, 2020
 - Three, 3-year, Council seats will be determined
 - In person balloting 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM at Mary Field School
 - As in prior elections, early voting will be permitted by Email and Post Mail
 - The 2020 DIC Election Committee is comprised of the following island residents: Jodee Brunning, Paul Vogel, Brad Klieve, Vail Shiply, and Sara Deitch
 - Leanne Coulter will serve as DIC liaison to the Committee
 - Committee duties and responsibilities are outlined in the DIC By-Laws
- Council Co-Chair John Schartner called for a moment of silence in memory of Council-Member Brandy Breese who recently passed. Leanne Coulter read a tribute to Brandy written by Council-Member Roger Pinckney:

With her bright eyes, quick smile and keen sense of right and wrong, Brandy Breese is a child of God. I say "is" not "was" because once you met her and got to know her, she will always be with you. That smile first drew me to her. "Brian," I said, "that girl of yours is always smiling." "Oh, she's from California," he replied, "and don't know no better."

It was a joke, of course. Brandy was smiling because she was happy, and she was happy because she was home. Changing a tire on a cart, bogging out in the salt marsh to rescue her beloved Walker hound, Mrs. Santa in our Christmas parade, serving on community committees, her energy was boundless and her enthusiasm infectious. She will be missed by all who knew her.

Rest well, my dear friend. You have surely earned it. My faith

tells me we will meet again. God's blessings till then.

Public Forum #1

Deborah Smith made a statement concerning Prospect Road. She explained there's a long history of attempts to close this road. Previous sessions of the DIC have supported keeping this road open. This is a historic and beautiful road. She is concerned by a trend to close-off portions of the island. Last time this issue arose, many Daufuskie citizens forwarded statements and emails to the County Council expressing opinions. A similar effort will be needed when the County Council considers the DIC resolution in January.

Council Co-Chair Leanne Coulter took this opportunity to share information concerning the Prospect Road issue:

- Only about 3-5% of the roads on DI are owned by Beaufort County. The remaining roads are on private property. Many of our roads run through private property. To allow Prospect Road to be closed would set a terrible precedent. It is the only non-paved road on the southern end of the island that does not flood during heavy rain. Therefore, it allows residents to safely reach a paved road.
- Please send a letter to the Beaufort County Council. You can send your email the Clerk of the Council, Sarah Brock at: sbrock@bcgov.net or to her assistant Brenda Owens at: brenna.owens@bcgov.net
- In the body of your letter, please state you would like all Council members to receive you email.

Community Happenings

On Thursday, 19 December, 6:00 PM, Daufuskie Elementary School will hold its holiday show at the firehouse.

The December edition of Local Life magazine contains an article profiling Jim and Carole Alberto. During the 1970's Jim and Carole were teachers on Daufuskie. They taught at Mary Field school.

On Saturday, 18 January, the Daufuskie Island marathon will be conducted. This race offers 13.1, 26.2 and 39.3 mile runs through paved and unpaved roads on Daufuskie.

Committee Reports

Planning Committee:

Transportation Task Force: Pat Allison, Dean Roberson and Steve Hill are working as a sub-committee; they have met several times this month. Pat provided an overview: We recently had a meeting with the board of Palmetto Breeze a few weeks ago. They have a marine division although it has been dormant for the last few years. We think many Federal grant opportunities need the local transportation organization to be the body that applies for the grant. We understand that they would have no problem applying for the grants if they were assured that the matching funds would be available.

Several grants are possible. The first is the FAST Act which has allotted \$80 million dollars annually from 2016 to 2020. Second is the awarded grant program for 2017/18 and note that Chatham County was awarded \$2,070,577. Next is a news story showing that Chatham Area Transit received \$1,300,000 for a new 149 seat passenger ferry. There is information about the Federal Lands Transportation Program covers costs with transportation planning and funding for transportation facilities on Federal Lands owned by, among others, the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Last is an article about BUILD Discretionary Grants that are available for projects in rural areas. It has expired, but this is the kind of thing that comes around periodically. Chatham Area Transit Authority seems to avail themselves of these kinds of grants frequently and it might be wise for your grant writers to reach out for information.

We believe the portion of Pinckney Island leased by the state would be the preferred site for the Daufuskie Island Ferry. We understand that the CC Haigh site might make the initial move faster and easier and I have no problem with that. It would solve all the parking issues forever and have absolutely no intrusion on existing neighborhoods.

The County may consider purchasing the Melrose Landing site on Daufuskie Island. By doing this the ferry service would have landings on Daufuskie and the mainland controlled by the county and never have to revisit this issue again.

Roads and Easements

Steve Hill reported on the Council's efforts to consider repaving several roads on Daufuskie.

Council Projects:

Church Road Cleanup: Roger Pinckney has been in touch with the County planning department. He's learned that the owner of the property at the corner of Church Road and Haig Point Road is being fined for each day debris is not removed and the property cleaned-up.

Public Forum #2

None

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM with a Merry Christmas to all.