

BOC moves forward with Comp plan update

• Committee named

By Matthew J. Permar
Glynn County has until October 31 to update, adopt and send their Comprehensive Plan (comp plan) to the Georgia Dept. of Community Affairs (DCA), a process they are required to undertake every five years.

The comp plan is required by the state as part of being and maintaining the DCA's 'Qualified Local Government Status.' There are a number of programs linked to the 'Status' that provide: local government assistance, community and economic development, and safe and affordable housing. These programs also include grants and other funding sources.

This time around the Glynn County Board of Commissioners (BOC) has contracted with the Coastal Regional Commission (CRC), instead of a private consulting firm, to update the comp plan.

The CRC is made up of ten member-counties, of which Glynn is one, and operates under the state DCA.

CRC Executive Director Allen Burns and CRC GIS Analyst Ian Kellett presented their comp plan update to the BOC during last week's (Tuesday, Jan. 17) called work session.

Burns told the BOC that the Oct. 31 deadline would be here soon and they had set an aggressive timetable to get the work done.

"This comprehensive plan will be your most important document this year," said Burns, "and maybe for the next five years. It sets the tone for where Glynn County is going. We will be directly involved with you and your staff and will keep you updated all the way. There's a lot of work

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Almost done



Above: Hunter Anders of MarineCo, a Brunswick marine contractor, removes the old, deteriorated weather vane (right photo) from the top of the Welcome Center at the Torras Causeway / Hwy. 17 intersection. A group of local businesses and citizens have been renovating the historic building which is nearing completion. MarineCo owner Sandy Spell said, "Celebrating 40 years of marine construction in the Golden Isles, our company is happy to be able to donate their time to help with the restoration of the historical visitor's center."



Photos by Michael Torras / Torras Foundation

City approves \$250,000 to prevent homelessness

By Pamela Permar-Shierling

The Brunswick City Commission had a brief agenda last week (Wednesday, Jan. 18) with most of the discussion taken up with the Comprehensive Plan. This meeting was the first public hearing to announce the Comp Plan update.

However, the commission

did approve the use of \$250,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to use in helping people remain in their homes. \$2,000 per family will be allotted.

The city will partner with the Coastal Georgia Area Community Action Authority, Inc. who will vet those

applying for the funds.

Tres Hamilton, Executive Director for the Action Authority, told the commission their mission was to move families to self sufficiency.

"Case management is very

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IPC approves housing site plan for Sea Island workers

By Pamela Permar-Shierling

Last week (Tuesday, Jan. 17) Glynn County's Island Planning Commission (IPC) approved a four story, 84 unit multi family housing site plan for the Sea Island Company.

The parcel is part of the Old Stables tract Planned Development (PD) District approved by the Glynn County Board of Commissioners (BOC) in January 2003. The PD was replaced entirely in August 2008 and amended January 2009, February 2009 and May 2010.

The original tract was almost 30 acres with 650 ft. fronting on Frederica Road and 2,000 ft. fronting along

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IPC

JIA seeks state funding for Public Safety Complex

By Pamela Permar-Shierling

Due to rising construction costs, the Jekyll Island Authority (JIA) will have to spend an estimated \$1.5 million more than budgeted to build the island's new Public Safety Complex on Shell Road.

During their January 17 meeting Jones Hooks, Executive Director of the JIA told the board that earlier in January he met with various members of Georgia's General Assembly as well as the chairs of the appropriations committees.

Hooks said one of the options was to ask the state for the money or to find the money in the JIA budget and stretch it over two fiscal years

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to be done and the first thing is to set up the stakeholders committee.”

The CRC gave County Manager Bill Fallon a list of 15 local positions and organizations that they recommended be represented on the stakeholders committee.

The list and the appointees included:

- Jekyll Island Authority - Jones Hooks
- Economic Development Authority - Bill Austin
- Golden Isles Assoc. of Realtors - Erin Vaughn
- Forward Brunswick - Lance Sabbe
- Brunswick Area Transportation Study - County Commissioner Walter Rafolski (At Large #2)
- Brunswick / Glynn Joint Water and Sewer Commission - Andrew Burroughs
- Island Planning Commission - Robert Ussery
- Mainland Planning Commission - Sherrye Gibbs
- Glynn Environmental Coalition - Tony Robinson
- Weyerhaeuser Company - Ken Durand
- Golden Isles Chamber of Commerce - Ralph Staffins
- Representative of Local Agricultural Interests - Sam McPherson
- Georgia Ports Authority - Jamie McCurry and
- Glynn County Board of Education - Eaddy Sams.

At the suggestion of County Commissioner Allen Booker (Dist. 5), the BOC added four more members. They included:

- Community First - Darren West
- Community First - Lericia Harris
- Glynn County Resident - George Ragsdale and
- Glynn County Resident - Josiah Watts.

This group of stakeholder committee members was approved by the BOC during their regular meeting Thursday, Jan. 19.

Making the presentation at Tuesday's work session, CRC GIS Analyst Kellett said zoning policies will be based on the comp plan and it allows

local officials, developers and residents the opportunity to plan for the future.

“There will be a lot of opportunity for input,” said Kellett, “The CRC does not decide what is in the plan, you do.”

According to Kellett, the comp plan takes input from a variety of community sources to synthesize a plan that is both agreeable and achievable in the actions and strategies proposed.

The first public hearing on the comp plan was held during last week's work session.

The rest of the CRC's time line is as follows:

- February - a public survey will be released and the first stakeholder meeting will be held;
- March - the second stakeholder meeting and a public listening session will be held;
- April - a third stakeholder meeting and a second public listening session will be held;
- May - a fourth stakeholder meeting;
- June - a third public listening session;
- July - a draft of the comp plan will be completed for review;
- August - a fourth and fifth public listening session will be held, along with a second public hearing; the draft will also be submitted to the DCA for their 40-day review process;
- September - DCA review process is over;
- October - the plan will be adopted by the Glynn BOC and forwarded to the DCA with a resolution of adoption.

First public hearing

Several people attended the public hearing and spoke on the comp plan during the work session on Tuesday.

Julian Smith's comments were primarily criticisms about individual portions of the CRC's presentation.

For example, he quoted a part of the presentation that said, “the plan paints a picture of community desires.” Smith said, “I have no idea what a picture of community desires looks like.”

Citing another quote from the presentation that said, “the plan takes input from a variety of community sources to synthesize a plan that is both agreeable and achievable in the actions and strategies proposed,” Smith's

response was that he suspected the plan would be agreeable to the county commissioners.

Citing this comment from the presentation's summary, “This plan will provide the community with a unique opportunity to shape the direction of Glynn County and ensure the future is that of sustainable and responsible growth,” Smith said, “I doubt the CRC can do anything that ensures the future of the county.”

Commission chairman Wayne Neal (Dist. 4) asked Burns if he wanted to respond to Smith's comments.

Burns said he had spoken to Smith about the process they planned to use for the comp plan. “We will make sure that all public comments are recognized and included in the process, whether they are in person or online,” said Burns.

Burns also stressed that the time line for the comp plan is “extremely tight” and urged people to use the on-line contact for their comments.

Responding to a question from Neal, Planning Manager Stefanie Leif said the CRC contact information was included on the county website.

Tavel Cowan, the Executive Director of the non-profit Bike Walk Golden Isles, spoke next and asked the BOC to include a stand alone master bike trail plan for the county in the comp plan.

Saying it would be for recreation and transportation, the woman said it would be a complex plan and a valuable asset to the county when it was done.

Reminding the group Glynn is part

of the East Coast Greenway between Maine and Miami, she cited towns like Athens, Savannah and Macon as having bike trails. She noted that Glynn has not participated in the Greenway like other counties.

She said her organization had support from the Golden Isles Track Club and Forward Brunswick.

Bike Walk Golden Isles is a fairly new organization that works to make the local communities safer and friendlier for people who walk, bike, and roll.

Note: A Bike / Multi Purpose Trail study for Glynn County was done in June 2016, and it can be found on the Glynn County website.

Coastal Hazards Specialist Jennifer Kline with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, told the BOC that in 2018 the BOC, along with the Brunswick City Commission and the Jekyll Island Authority adopted a disaster recovery and redevelopment plan. The plan included action items on sea level rise and shore line protection, and management steps that need to be part of the BOC's comp plan.

She said the comp plan and the county's hazard mitigation plan make the county eligible for FEMA and state funds.

The last to speak was Josiah Watts who talked about maintaining cultural and historic integrity of various areas of the county.

He also said the stakeholder committee needed to be inclusive of all

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aspects of the community and suggested adding more members.

“Your choices are only as good as what is in front of you,” said Watts, “You need a wide array of options and we’d like all to be included.”

He was included as a member of the stakeholder committee.

After the public hearing ended, Booker mentioned that he had submitted a

few names for the committee.

Fallon said he had the recommendations from the CRC and would add Booker’s suggestions and present it to the BOC on Thursday night.

Neal asked Burns if there were a number of members that would be too large for the committee to be efficient.

Burns said all that was the BOC’s choice. “I gave you a list of 15 positions, you can go up or down from that. We have 39 people on our CRC board, but that many would be too large for this comp plan.”

City Commission

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important,” Hamilton said. “We assess the entire household and household members are case managed for six months to a year.”

Commissioner Julie Martin asked Hamilton to make sure the money only went to city residents since the county is not participating in the program.

The city commission approved the agreement with the Action Authority which is for a year.

In other business:

- John Hunter, Planning, Zoning, Building, and Codes Director, outlined the upcoming Comp Plan process for the commission.

January: The city’s Planning and Appeals Committee (PAC) will be established as the Comp Plan Steering Committee.

February: the city commission will appoint a stakeholder committee based on PAC recommendations and the stakeholder committee will hold its first meeting.

March, April, May: the update process will be ongoing by the steering committee. Staff will complete all updates and provide city commission with periodic updates.

June and July: Public engagement and input during meetings and listening sessions. Synopsis of public input will be prepared and reviewed with stakeholders for input into the Comp Plan.

August 30: Complete final draft for city commission review prior to submission to CRC (Coastal Regional Commission) for approval. A second public hearing will be held prior to submission to the CRC.

By October 30: City commission will adopt the Comp Plan.

Financial Focus

Reported by Ginny Johnson



The IRS won’t call to demand you make an immediate payment through

Watch out for tax season scams

It’s that time of year when we do our taxes — but it’s also the same time that tax scammers go to work. What scams should you watch for — and how can you avoid being victimized?

Sadly, the list of scams is pretty long, including demands for payment or requests for “additional information” pertaining to your tax refund, in which the sender asks for your Social Security number and other personal information. These scam emails can look quite official, often incorporating the IRS logo. You might also receive scam text messages containing bogus links claiming to be the IRS website or an online “tool” that can help process your refund faster.

But keep these points in mind: The IRS generally won’t contact you by phone and won’t contact you by email, text messages or social media channels to ask for personal or financial information. The IRS begins most correspondence to taxpayers through regular mail delivered by the U.S. Postal Service.

a prepaid debit card or wire transfer. If you owe taxes, the IRS generally will mail you a bill. And the IRS won’t threaten to bring in the police or another law enforcement group to arrest you for not paying your taxes.

In general, be extremely skeptical about any type of communication purporting to be from the IRS that sounds bullying or over-inquisitive — and certainly don’t give out any personal or financial information. But these fake messages aren’t the only tax-season scams out there. You might even receive a direct deposit from what appears to be the U.S. Treasury Department — but if you weren’t expecting it, something’s likely not right. This payment could be a sign that a fraudulent tax return was filed in your name, and it might be followed by a communication from a supposed IRS agent requesting this overpayment be sent to them. If this happens to you, you’ll want to contact the IRS right away, and you could also ask your bank to return the deposit to the government.

Other scams don’t claim to originate directly from the IRS,

as scammers pretend to be from real or imaginary tax organizations. For example, you could get a message from the Taxpayer Advocate Service, an independent organization within the IRS, but this agency won’t contact you without a legitimate reason. Or you could receive a message from the nonexistent “Bureau of Tax Enforcement.” Your best bet is to delete these messages immediately or send them to your spam folder.

Not all tax season scams originate from fraudulent IRS representatives or fake agencies. You also need to be careful about whom you hire to prepare your taxes. If possible, get a recommendation from a trusted friend or family member. And keep in mind that a legitimate tax preparer must have a valid Preparer Tax Identification Number and must sign your tax return. If someone doesn’t have this number or is reluctant to sign your return, it may well be a sign that this individual is a “ghost preparer” who only wants to pocket your fee.

Tax scammers are, unfortunately, here to stay — but remaining vigilant can help you keep them from causing problems for you in this tax season and all the ones in the future.

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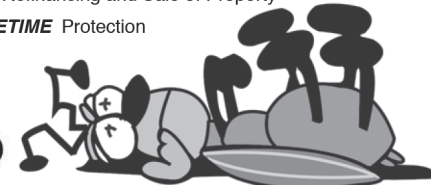
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