

PAC discusses Island View project, again

By Pamela Permar-Shierling

Wesley Franks and Jonathan Roberts of Roberts Civil Engineering answered questions from Brunswick's Planning and Appeals Commission (PAC) members, and from citizens about the proposed Island View development project at 3302 Glynn Avenue during the PAC work session last week (March 24).

The main concerns from the public and the PAC have not changed. However, Franks, Roberts and Vassa Cate, who is developing the project, answered all the questions and discussed the how's and whys of the project.

The main concerns are traffic, storm water, density, height of the buildings, parking, landscaping, and trees.

Parking was one of the

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Island View

CRC hosts second comp plan meeting

By Matthew J. Permar

On Wednesday, March 22, the Coastal Resources Commission (CRC) hosted the second of four stakeholder meetings to discuss the Glynn County Comprehensive Plan update.

Under Georgia state law counties must create a comp plan and update it every five years in order to qualify and remain eligible for grants and other state resources.

The stakeholders are a large group of local people representing a wide variety of organizations and citizens including: the Golden Isles Development Authority; Brunswick Glynn Joint Water and

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Comprehensive plan

Jekyll Island Public Safety Complex



Above: The rendering of the new Public Safety Complex. Provided by the Jekyll Island Authority

Right: Tossing the dirt at the official ground breaking for the Jekyll Island Public Safety Complex are: (left to right) Jekyll Island Fire Chief Dennis Gailey, JIA Deputy Executive Director Noel Jensen, JIA Board Members Robert Krueger, Bill Gross, and Chair Dale Atkins, JIA Executive Director Jones Hooks, JIA Board Member Dr. Buster Evans, Trooper Brandon Smith and JIA Board Member Joe Wilkinson.

Islander Staff Photo - Shierling



Jekyll breaks ground on new public safety complex

By Pamela Permar-Shierling

The Jekyll Island Authority (JIA) officially broke ground on the new Public Safety Complex last week (March 21).

The project, which was first presented in the summer of 2019, has been adversely impacted by inflation and supply chain issues that have increased costs.

The JIA worked with Dabbs Williams Construction, of Statesboro, Ga., the contracted firm overseeing construction, on value engineering to get the project closer to the original estimated budget.

The first budget estimate to build the complex was \$2.5 million, but it was determined that amount would not meet the project's needs.

A year ago the JIA went back to the state and asked for \$5.9 million which they received. Then construction bids came in much higher and the JIA asked the state for another \$1.5 million.

The state included the additional \$1.5 million in the 2023 supplemental appropriations bill which has already been signed by Gov. Brian Kemp.

The new facility will be approximately 19,700 sq. ft. and cost an estimated \$7.5 million.

Jekyll Island Fire / EMS, Georgia State Patrol Post 35, and an emergency operations center to complement the main EOC in Glynn County during emergencies will be housed in the complex.

The facility will also consist of sleeping quarters, an apparatus parking / bay area, and functional areas including a kitchen, offices, storage, a common entry / lobby, and a classroom area.

"We are looking forward to beginning construction on the long-awaited Public Safety Complex and being able to provide our residents and guests with a seamless emergency response," said JIA Deputy Executive Director, Noel Jensen. "Being able to provide updated living and working conditions for our first responders is also a principal goal and priority of this project."

The Complex will be located

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Public Safety Complex

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Sewer Commission; the Weyerhaeuser Company; both the Mainland and Island Planning Commissions; four Glynn residents; the Jekyll Island Authority; the Port Authority; Local Agricultural Interests; two County Commissioners; the Glynn Environmental Coalition; Forward Brunswick; the Board of Education; the Chamber of Commerce and the Golden Isles Association of Realtors.

Part of the presentation put on by the CRC's Ian Kellett and Aaron Carpenter included population projections for the county over the next 40 years.

With a current population of about 85,799, Kellett said Glynn's population will surpass 100,000 residents by 2050, an increase of 22.7%.

Kellett said, "The growth rate is expected to increase until 2030 and then level off to around 0.5% a year."

The consultants said that Glynn county's population has grown by 5,637 people in the last 10 years and that another 20,000 people are projected to move to the Golden Isles during the next 40 years, with the county population exceeding 100,000 by 2050.

Glynn County Commission chairman Wayne Neal (Dist. 3) disagreed and said he found it hard to believe that 200 to 300 people a year will

move to the county by 2030.

Neal's disagreement was in part based on the estimated number of housing units planned for construction.

Kellett said the numbers came from the 2020 Census.

Realtor Sherrye Gibbs said people don't always participate in the Census for whatever reason and so the data is not necessarily reliable.

Kellett said the meeting was a discussion, not a debate and the goal of the meetings, which are scheduled through the fall, is to develop a plan for the next five to 10 years.

There was also some discussion about the lack of affordable housing in the county.

It was stated that Brunswick's available housing shrunk by 298 units, while 409 additional homes are on the unincorporated mainland and 1,648 homes have been built on the islands for a net gain of 1,759 between 2011 and 2021, an increase of 4.4%.

According to the consultants, two thirds of the occupied housing units are owner-occupied, while the other third is renters. This is slightly lower than the state average of 35.5% renters.

Kellett said there are 8,690 housing units in the county, about half of which are reserved for seasonal use. Less than one quarter are currently available to rent or sell.

Regarding housing costs, the consultants said the typical home value has increased by \$166,000 over the past 10 years, an 11.3% average annual increase.

Rental costs have also increase over the course of 2022, going up 12% or roughly \$180.

Neal said the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) is one of the reasons driving housing prices for rent and sale.

Neal also said the county was slow to recover from the downturn in the housing economy in 2008. He said it didn't start to come back until 2015.

The consultants also talked about "cost-burdened" households.

As defined by the federal Housing and Urban Development agency (HUD), a "cost-burdened" household has to spend between 30% and 50% of their gross monthly income on housing related costs. "Severely cost-burdened" households spend over 50%.

Running short on time, Kellett and Carpenter recapped the key points relating to housing:

- new housing units are struggling to meet demand - over the past 10 years Glynn has added 1,759 units for 5,637 people and permitting for new houses has not returned to pre-2008 levels;
- housing costs are rising faster than incomes - typical housing costs are above \$1,600 for new leases and

mortgages;

- the majority of available housing is large (3+ bedrooms) single family units - two-thirds of households are made up of 1 - 2 people, while only 30% of the housing units have two or less bedrooms;

- approximately 3 in 10 households are cost burdened - 45% of renters are cost burdened, and 22% of homeowners are cost burdened.

The CRC will hold the second 'public listening session' during the First Friday event in downtown Brunswick on Friday, April 7. These are sessions during which the public can voice any ideas or concerns about the comprehensive plan to the consultants.

The next stakeholders meeting, the third, will be at 1:00 in the afternoon April 26, tentatively slated for the Roosevelt Lawrence Center.

There will be a fourth in May. There will be a second and third 'public listening session' in April and June.

The plan will be drafted for review in July, followed by two more public listening sessions in August along with another formal public hearing.

After those meetings the draft of the document will be transmitted to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for a 40 day review period.

The Glynn County Board of Commissioners is expecting to adopt the plan in October.

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