

Roadside trees need attention

WHEN IT WAS FIRST announced this winter that the state Department of Transportation planned to cut trees along Highway 17 in front of Brookgreen Gardens, many people were concerned. Some remembered what happened in 2020, when a project to widen the shoulders of the highway from Prince George to the Waccamaw River bridge began with no notice to property owners.

Now that work has finished at Brookgreen, it must be said that it isn't bad in spite of the loss of some large oaks. What's surprising is that there are still oaks that overhang that section of highway as they do many other local roads. The difference is the trees that are still standing have canopies that spread out evenly from the trunk. The biggest of the ones that are now gone were only growing on one side. That wasn't apparent through the windshields of passing vehicles. Up close, those trees were not so picturesque.

What was also remarkable about the recent project was the call to a local lawmaker asking if the same thing could be done along Kings River Road. Who would say such a thing?

While Georgetown County has slowly increased protection for trees on development sites and wisely begun to think about maintaining a canopy rather than just specimen trees. Once you start to notice, there are many trees – ones that are familiar features of our Lowcountry landscape – that are growing unevenly and leaning rather than spreading. Who is responsible for maintenance? We don't know, but we know who will be called to cut them down.

WHS sailing

All hands on deck

To the editor:

I enjoyed reading "Running before the wind" by Chris Sokoloski, (Article, April 17). It brought back memories of my sailing days, but more importantly the recognition it gave Bruce Watts who sponsored the Waccamaw High School sailing team.

There was a time I worked with the S.C. Department of Mental Health in Georgetown as a counselor. It was Bruce who took some of the kids I worked with sailing. These kids, many who came from broken or dysfunctional homes, had a once in lifetime experience that brightened, if only for an afternoon, their sad and often depressing lives.

Articles like this one

are what make the Coastal Observer weekly must reading. Thank you!

Hartmut Fege
Pawleys Island

To the editor:

Thanks to Chris Sokoloski and the Coastal Observer for the great article on the Waccamaw Sailing Team. Our team loved it.

I would also like to add two people that were founding members and are still active with the team: Amy Jones, sailing director at the S.C. Maritime Museum, and Bob Turner, the first coach of the team.

Amy was also instrumental in getting the boats for the museum. Her husband, Chris Register, maintains the boats.

Bruce Watts
Pawleys Island

Words to live by

Aretha said it best

To the editor:

This probably dates me. One of my favorite songs of all time is "Respect" by Aretha Franklin.

These days that song keeps coming back to me. I believe a major reason for the remembrance is the division in our nation. At times it seems we have

forgotten how to respect one another.

Respecting one another includes listening to one another, recognizing that we all have part of the truth about important issues of the day, but no one has all the truth.

Jim Watkins
Pawleys Island

Golf course rezoning

Land use makes strange bedfellows

To the editor:

Wow! In politics there can be strange alliances, but the one that now exists between Keep It Green/Keep It Green Advocacy (KIG/A) and Chinese-owned Founders International (owners of Litchfield Country Club and Founders) golf courses is troubling. Both oppose the proposed draft Neighborhood Amenity District (NAD) zoning ordinances regulating golf course land use that dramatically reduces residential development.

In a blast email last week, KIG/A attorney Cindy Person actually embraced the tactics used by the owner of the golf courses to oppose the ordinances.

Under a big, bold "Good News" heading, Person recited a quote from Founders International attorney, state Sen.

Stephen Goldfinch, who said at the Planning Commission hearing on the ordinances: "This plan is not ready for prime time, and I ask you, respectfully, send this back to council and tell them, please defer this until these people are able to sit at the table and we can have a negotiated agreement."

Incredibly, the video of the meeting shows KIG supporters actually applauding Sen. Goldfinch when he finished with his testimony on behalf of the golf course owner.

It's my understanding that Founders is threatening to sue for a "takings" unless they get a "negotiated agreement" with the county to allow a lot more residential units per acre. Both KIG/A and Chinese-owned Founders are now aligned in opposition to these well-constructed ordinances that would slash

the residential density of the golf course properties from four units per acre to one unit per five acres and add a restriction that any new parcels must front on existing road rights of way at the time the ordinances pass, a significant decrease in density.

They are indeed strange bedfellows.

For the Litchfield Country Club course, the proposed ordinances would reduce the hundreds of homes that could be built under the current R-10 zoning to just 30 homes, but that's not enough for KIG, they want zero, zilch, nada. That's not legally possible – it would likely be ruled a "taking" – nor is it smart to possibly end up with an abandoned, overgrown golf course, like Indian Wells in Horry County, with no other use at all, that undermines neigh-

borhood property values.

KIG has taken a scorched earth approach, using inflammatory tactics that have now backfired and helped and emboldened the owner of the golf courses.

The potential losers are the golf course neighborhoods. I have and continue to lead the decrease in density on the Waccamaw Neck, which I thought KIG was for ... guess not.

If these stopgap ordinances fail to pass County Council and these neighborhoods are left unprotected, look no further than the shocking alliance between Keep It Green/Keep It Green Advocacy and Founders International.

Stella Mercado
Willbrook Plantation
The writer represents County Council District 6.

Economic development

Georgetown's future isn't in smokestacks

To the editor:

I have lived in this community for decades. This is my home, and I think of this place like a "heaven on earth." The beauty of the people here is only matched by the beauty of the unity of water and marsh. We have so much to be thankful for, but we can't let our future be determined by special interests who want to destroy our community and our economy.

The closure of the International Paper and Liberty Steel sites marked a significant shift for Georgetown, leaving behind hundreds of local jobs and impacting families and small businesses that relied on them. But these two vacant properties aren't just remnants of the past. They represent a rare opportunity to chart a new course for our community, one focused on economic growth, local

access and a revitalized waterfront that serves the people of Georgetown.

I have heard from many local citizens that we need to come together now to chart a new course. Georgetown does not need another heavy industrial facility or a giant polluting biomass plant. Our friends here have made it clear to me: we don't want to trade one smokestack for another.

Representative Lee Hewitt is right. We want a waterfront that works for everyone, not just a few. That means planning for redevelopment that welcomes advanced manufacturing, shopping, dining, mixed-use spaces and public amenities that bring life and activity back to our downtown.

We envision a Georgetown where the former Liberty Steel and International Paper sites are thoughtfully redeveloped

to bring high-tech, high-paying jobs, support small businesses and strengthen our local economy. With the right vision, these properties can become hubs of activity, featuring industry, retail, restaurants and public spaces that reconnect the waterfront with the people who live and work here. This is a chance to respect Georgetown's history while building a future rooted in innovation, opportunity and lasting community benefit.

This kind of revitalization will not happen overnight, and it will not happen without strong public engagement. Citizens deserve transparency, a seat at the table, and real opportunities to shape the outcome.

Our local leaders must take bold steps to attract the right partners, ones who share our vision for a clean, accessible and eco-

nomically thriving waterfront.

I was asked by friends to form a local group to reflect that vision. Citizens for Georgetown was created to amplify your voice for our community. We believe the best days for Georgetown aren't behind us, they're ahead of us. But only if we choose wisely. No more short-sighted proposals that prioritize heavy industry over people. No more waiting for someone else to decide our future.

Let's move forward together with purpose, vision and pride.

To learn more and get involved, visit citizensfor-georgetown.com. Georgetown's next chapter starts now.

Tom Swatzel
Murrells Inlet
The writer is a former County Council member and political consultant.

Indigo Indivisible

'Town hall' wasn't what group pretended

To the editor:

I have previously written about the Georgetown-based Indigo Indivisible, a local chapter of a George Soros-funded leftist agitation group that coordinates with the Democrat national committee.

On April 14, Indigo Indivisible hosted a fake "public town hall" at the Gen. Robert H. Reed Recreational Center in Market Common. The organizers pretended that Congressman Russell Fry (R) of the 7th Congressional District might show up.

Of course, he wisely avoided being ambushed by a hostile group. Instead, Indigo Indivisible mounted a blowup photo of Fry's face on a pedestal

in mockery.

The room contained about 175 Democrat activists posing as grass roots constituents. Typical for Indivisible events, the audience was overwhelmingly white, affluent and elderly. There were only six black people present which belies Democrat pretensions of being diverse.

The only Hispanic person present was a member of the Young Republicans who was peacefully observing the spectacle with a couple dozen Trump supporters.

Of note, only the Trump supporters wore clothing that featured American flags; as usual, the Democrats avoided

any symbol of patriotism.

The hour-long meeting featured preplanned, scripted "questions" for the absent congressman. The usual false leftist grievances and allegations were aired: democracy is under threat, Musk is stealing our Social Security, federal health benefits are being cut.

One person lied that Fry had been appointed, not elected. Another lied that District 7 was gerrymandered for Fry. Another lied that Vice President Vance had never worked a day in his life. Another lied that Trump was defying a SCOTUS order by deporting the MS-13 illegal alien to El Salvador. In reality it was an unlawful

circuit court ruling.

Nobody mentioned the truth about DOGE. It is cutting fraud waste and abuse in the federal government. Instead, Indivisible grandstanded in favor of the bloated entitlement state. It was like attending an anti-religious revival, an appeal to the prophet Karl Marx, coupled with the worship of Babylon the Great.

Kevin Glynn
Willbrook Plantation

Where to write

The Coastal Observer welcomes letters from readers. Send letters by email to letters@coastalobserver.com.

