



HIGHTIDINGS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE FOREST BEACH OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.

Spring 2021

2020 in Review

Just as in every other area of the county, the Covid-19 virus has derailed many plans, caused many meetings to be canceled, and left us unsure of the future. As we go to press on this issue of our newsletter, there are four pressing issues with which the Association is engaged; they have been highlighted in other articles. Each issue will flow into 2021:

1. Implementation of the new flood plans;
2. Next steps to address the parking situation;
3. The new proposed lighting ordinance; and
4. The Beaufort County Open Land Trust (BCOLT) violations.

The town will be discussing the first three at its annual workshop that is scheduled for January 28-29, 2021.

In 2020, we did accomplish a great deal that will position us for some wonderful things in the future.

First and foremost, the Association has not engaged in any ongoing legal matters, and for the first time in many years, we have been able to accumulate reserves.

We have moved our monthly meetings to a virtual venue allowing members who are not here on the island to participate.

We have continued to build our email list and have been able to send meeting notifications and past minutes to members.

The Beaufort County Open Land Trust has finally issued its violations letter, so we can begin to work with owners to remediate violations.

We have completed a site survey of the Avocet beach access in order to begin work on a design to improve the beach access and use part of the design as a template to improve other accesses.

Finally, we have received a clear ruling from Town staff on the issue of impervious driveways. As of May 2020, the Town permitting department will no longer allow impervious driveways in the Forest Beach Overlay district. Therefore, any new driveways will need to be pervious, i.e., pavers, gravel, or some other product that allows water to absorb into the ground. This is not a new rule; it has been part of the Forest Beach Overlay Ordinance since its inception.

THE PARK OPENS

After years in the making, on December 10, 2020, a virtual ribbon cutting ceremony was held to officially open the Lowcountry Celebration Park. It is now time to start enjoying the Park. The playground will be open daily from sunrise to sunset, and the park closes at 10 pm.

The following are some of the park's features and amenities:

- **The Adventure Playground**, named after the ship Captain William Hilton was sailing when he discovered Hilton Head Island. It features a playground and a reimagined design of the ship where children can play
- **The Pavilion and Lawn**, where fun events and festivals can be held
- **The Perimeter Walk**, subtly lighted for evening strolls around the park
- **The Setting Sun** sculpture, a reflection of our public arts program
- **Exercise Stations** for fitness buffs
- **Wi-Fi, Lights, and Security Cameras** for your safety and connectivity
- **The Sandbox Children's Museum**, which will open next year and feature play and educational elements for children
- **Restrooms and parking**



The addition of the park in Forest Beach finally gives our neighborhood access to a playground, a performance venue, and a large field for kids to run and play. It also gives the south end of the island the ability to support festivals and other gatherings. The Association worked closely with the town to get the park on the property and fought to overturn the decision to build the college on this site.

The link to the ceremony is available on the Association's website, where you'll also find additional pictures.



Myrtle's Turtle Tracker Update

The last nest for the 2020 season was inventoried October 13. There were 291 nests laid by 61 females. (Each female lays a clutch 4-6 times per season.) 20 new females visited Hilton Head Island beaches this year. Emergence success was high, at 72%, but 4,000 turtle hatchlings were lost to misorientation (going the wrong way) due to light from oceanfront houses, condos, and hotels. There is currently a new lighting ordinance under consideration by Town Council that would limit light that threatens the hatchlings' orientation to the ocean. Forest Beach, mostly along Dune Lane, contains the largest number of light ordinance violators, because most of the properties are rentals. There was also an increase of nest tampering, which is a federal offense.

Trash was also a huge issue on the beach. Many tourists to Hilton Head Island were new this year, resulting in trash removal not meeting our standards. Some displayed inappropriate behavior and language. Amber Kuehn, head of the Sea Turtle Patrol, reported that 1,067 chairs; 262 tents; 1,103 towels; 835 toys; and 256 other trash items were removed. This does not include the trash that was removed by the 350 members of the Turtle Trackers. Large dumpsters were installed along the 12 miles of beach to accommodate the collection of trash left by beach visitors.

Dunes were lost this year to king tides and Tropical Storm Isaias. For more information, please contact seaturtlepatrolHHI.org.

Forest Beach maintains a list of people who would like to help fill in holes, remove trash, and educate the public (aka Turtle Trackers) on the importance of saving the sea turtles that nest here each year. The season runs from May 1 – October 31. There are 6 chapters that cover all the beaches: Sea Pines, Forest Beach, Shipyard, Palmetto Dunes, Port Royal, and North End. There are more than 350 Turtle Trackers and a governing representative board. It is a 501(C)(3) organization. If you would like to join this wonderful group of dedicated volunteers, please contact Debbie Urato at urato@roadrunner.com for more information.



Parking

If you go back and reference previous Association newsletters, you will see that parking has been an issue in Forest Beach for many, many years. Since the problem is island-wide, the town engaged Walker Consultants to complete a parking study.

The study provided by Walker Consultants lays out six immediate action items. When the study was presented to Town Council, Council decided to have the Public Planning Committee prioritize the immediate action items so they could be discussed at the Town Council's workshop in January 2021. At the November 19, 2020 Public Planning Committee meeting, the committee agreed with the town staff's recommendation to take the topics to the workshop; they include: revision of town code to establish additional paid parking zones and residential parking district policy. Staff also recommended that the cost of the 2-year parking pass offered to residents be reviewed; it has been in effect for the past 27 years.

Should fees be reimplemented at the Coligny Beach parking lot, beachgoers hoping to avoid paying parking fees will once again look to our neighborhoods and beach accesses as free parking options. The Association will continue to stay involved and keep you updated, as this topic affects everyone in Forest Beach.

The complete report supplied by Walker Consultants is available on the Association website. The immediate action items referenced above can be found beginning on page 141 of the PDF.

Forest Beach...An Amazing Place

People who visit Forest Beach always comment on how green the area is, how buildings are set back, how low signs are, and how lighting is controlled. We do not have houses painted in bright colors, and lush, green buffers exist around houses. These appearances don't just happen; there are covenants and ordinances that define the look and feel of Forest Beach and the entire island for that matter.

Through the year, the Association receives many calls and emails from new property owners saying they had no idea there was an Association in Forest Beach. They were also unaware of covenants the Association enforces and an ARB process to follow when building, renovating, or repairing their property. The easiest way to learn of such covenants is for owners to look at their title insurance policy and review the book and page references in the deed restriction section. Owners will also want to review the Land Management Ordinance (LMO) on the Town's website, specifically the Forest Beach Overlay District rules. Property owners in the Lawton subdivision that is located on the ocean side of South Forest Beach between Alder Lane and Laurel Lane will also want to be familiar with the Conservation Easement that applies to The Strand between their property and the ocean. All relevant documents are available on the Forest Beach Association's website. Should there be specific questions, the website offers the ability to ask questions.

New Flood Plans

Most slab-on-grade houses that exist in Forest Beach and elsewhere on the island today were built prior to 1987 when the flood elevation was at 9 feet. When the flood maps changed in 1987 and the elevation was changed to 14 feet, this resulted in some 20,000 homes on the island being classified as non-conforming. When classified as non-conforming, any renovation projects can only be renovated up to 50% of the STRUCTURE'S VALUE.

What does that mean? If you want to update a slab-on-grade house, work must occur in phases so that each phase does not exceed 50% of the STRUCTURE'S VALUE. In some cases, builders find it cheaper to knock down the existing house and rebuild. Such an approach eliminates multiple permits, multiple designs, double work, and ultimately shortens the project's timeline. Unfortunately, when there is a rebuild, owners and contractors go for the big return and design the new property at the maximum square footage of 5,000 feet per the Forest Beach Overlay district in the LMO.

Per the LMO, the highest a residential house can be is 35 feet, but that is 35 feet above Base Flood Elevation (BFE). Thus, if the decision is to tear down and rebuild, the existing cottage that was at a 9-foot flood elevation, on a slab, and is only 15 feet tall, will need to now add 5 feet of "free board" if the town changes the flood elevation to 14 feet. Then, a 35-foot house is added on top of that, and you have a 40-foot high house vs. the 15-foot cottage.

The process to implement the new flood maps is just beginning; nonetheless, it will move quickly as the maps need to be approved by Town Council by March 23, 2021 and implemented by July 2021. If you own a slab-on-grade house, plan to build a new house, renovate an existing home, or own property in an area that floods, you need to watch for LMO meetings, Public Planning Committee meetings, and Town Council meetings that will discuss or vote on items pertaining to implementing the revised flood maps. According to Town staff, flood insurance rates are set per the FEMA flood maps, not higher regulatory standards set by the town. More to come as this develops.

The South Forest Beach Strand

In 1989, several homeowners purchased 30 acres of oceanfront property from the bankrupt Hilton Head Company. The six-member corporation, named Lawton Beach Holdings, LLC, organized to acquire The Strand and protect it for the benefit of the community. In 2009, Lawton Beach Holdings, LLC placed a federal conservation easement in perpetuity and then transferred the property to the Beaufort County Open Land Trust (BCOLT).

The Beaufort County Open Land trust ultimately sold The Strand for \$1.00 to the Forest Beach Owners' Association. The Association is therefore the owner of The Strand and accountable to BCOLT to ensure that restrictions placed on the land are upheld.

Each year, BCOLT inspects the property to ensure compliance with the Federal Conservation Easement and, in December 2020, BCOLT issued the Association a cumulative three-year report. The report details violations that include items such as excessive trimming of vegetation, backwashes for pumps draining onto the Strand property, fences that extend past an owner's property line and onto the Strand property, adjacent property owners dumping (continued on page 4).

2021 Board of Directors		
Name/Position	Term Exp	Email
Larry LaBanc – President	2022	larrybankme@gmail.com
Mira Scott – Vice President	2021	mirascott101@gmail.com
Debbie Urato – Sec/Treas	2024	durato@roadrunner.com
Jack Daly, Past President	2023	jackdalyhhi@yahoo.com
Doug Felten	2021	dougfelten@yahoo.com
Massimo Santangelo	2023	Massimo.Santangelo@vacationclub.com
Frank Roberts	2022	fxroberts56@Gmail.com
John Snodgrass – Exec Dir	N/A	fbassn@gmail.com

Strand (continued from page 3)

debris on The Strand property, irrigation systems placed on The Strand property, and outdoor showers and pavers placed on The Strand property. All are considered to be common-law trespassing by BCOLT.

BCOLT has requested that the Association meet with the Trust as soon as possible to develop a mutually agreeable “Voluntary Compliance Plan” to address the conservation easement violations. At the time of this newsletter going to press, the Association is reviewing the report and plans to meet with BCOLT at their earliest convenience.

The report issued by BCOLT can be found on the Association’s website.

Beach Accesses

In addition to the Coligny Beach Park and the Alder Lane beach accesses, both owned by the Town, Forest Beach has 18 neighborhood accesses that are owned by the Association. The accesses owned by the Association in South Forest Beach are between Laurel Lane and Bayberry and in North Forest Beach, between Avocet and Ibis. These beach accesses exist to provide entry to the beach for property owners of Forest Beach and their guests. In April when the town closed the town parks that included the Coligny and Alder Lane beach parks, these 18 beach accesses provided our owners and guests an entrance to the beach during the pandemic lockdown. Without them during the lockdown, our residents would not have been able to access the beach. Most of these accesses remain very natural; however, some have been improved where adjacent houses must enter for their parking from the side, thus crossing over the access.

Oceanfront properties are permitted to build dune walkovers over the dunes so that they can access the beach from their homes. Being that these accesses cross over the dunes, they help to protect the dunes and ensure they grow to protect oceanfront properties from storm surge. One of the goals of the Association is to begin to design similar dune walkways for our beach accesses, so that foot traffic to the beach can go over the protected dunes, and the dunes can still protect the neighborhood from storm surge. This effort will mainly be in North Forest beach. To date, we have begun this investigation with the Avocet beach access; there has been a survey completed of this beach access, and a draft design is currently in the works.



Are You on Our Email Distribution List?

If you are not receiving our emails, it is easy to sign up. Simply go to the Association’s web page and click on subscribe to email list. Depending on your device, you may need to click on the three bars “options menu bar” to open the collapsed menu to see the additional items.

Also, follow us on Facebook.

Two of the major expenses of the Association are mailing the annual meeting notice and the annual dues notice. In 2021, we plan to eliminate the mailing of the annual meeting announcement and only send notice of the meeting by email. The annual meeting is always the third Saturday of October and is held at 10:00 AM. Therefore, the 2021 meeting will be held on October 16, 2021 at 10:00 AM. This year’s and future years’ annual dues notifications sent in January will continue to be sent via US mail.

ARB Process

The Association maintains an architectural review process. Forms and prices can be found on the Association’s website.

Pay Your Annual Dues Online

Don’t want to pay your dues by check? The option to pay your dues by credit card is available through PayPal on the Association’s website. Annual dues are billed in January for existing property owners, and each quarter for new owners and property transfers.