

Opinions

EDITORIALS

Letters to the Editor



Setting sail

The Town of Mount Pleasant may scrap plans to build a youth sailing facility at the new waterfront park because of the unsafe currents that rip through the area. Once this little aspect of the waterfront park was approved it didn't necessarily stay in the forefront of anyone's mind.

It was considered a done deal until town council member Gary Santos strolled out to the end of the pier and witnessed first hand how an ebb tide could make sailing away from the dock very difficult. He says the current and the tide could essentially pin an inexperienced sailor under the pier.

In talking about this potential hazard with retired (Coast Guard) Commander of the Port, John Cameron, Santos thought it might be prudent to look into other alternatives before making a potentially dangerous decision to put youth in sailboats in a dangerous spot.

One of those alternatives is a partnership between the Town of Mount Pleasant and Hobcaw Yacht Club. Private/public partnerships are entered into all of the time in regards to recreation. For example, the town uses school gyms and ball fields for various activities.

Cameron invited Santos to their monthly yacht club board meeting to discuss what the town had in mind as far as a youth sailing center and the potential to partner with the club to host it at their facility.

"We have other options if they decide not to do this," Santos told the *Moultrie News*.

"Perhaps more important for the public to understand, before they get up in arms, is that nothing is on or off the drawing table. The plan to host a youth sailing program at the pier is still in place."

That indicates that all of this discussion is exploratory and may result in no change at all.

In fact, Alhambra Hall used to have regattas off of its shores. Santos said he'd like to look into the possibility of putting a small pier there. There is now new property along Shem Creek that has potential, aside from the commercial traffic that might pose a threat.

Santos worries about mixing commercial boats with small sailboats, but he hasn't ruled the area out.

Santos and a host of other citizens have been pushing for a sailing center in Mount Pleasant for a long time. Someone should have taken the time to investigate the feasibility of putting the center at the waterfront park way back when. All of this time, the sailing community has sat back idle because they thought it was a done deal. The negotiations with Hobcaw and others could have begun years ago.

Santos is right. It is prudent to check other alternatives for the sake of safety. However it should have been sooner rather than later. That's what the planning process is all about.

The sailing community will at least get something. But the idea is not about just giving the sailing community something. The whole idea is to invite the entire community to get excited about sailing and open it up to those who would otherwise not have the chance. A little something is not good enough. Great thought must be put into a first class facility. Hobcaw Yacht Club already hosts the town's Youth Sailing Regatta each summer. A precedence has been set as far as partnering with another entity. It's worked well, and if that partnership can be expanded upon and kids can sail, great.

Cameron is very happy with the town for considering a variety of places to build a youth sailing center. As the former commander of the Port, his primary job was to oversee the safety of activities along the waterway.

He says the place in question is navigationally challenging because two major rivers come together there, causing the current to do very unusual things. Cameron said it has nothing to do with ships from the port navigating the area as some have suggested. "The port is not exploiting or having any impact on the town," he told the *Moultrie News*. "It's frustrating to me that there are those trying to impose these perceptions on an open and honest discussion."

Cameron said that in his Coast Guard career, he has never worked with a port community so supportive of recreational sailing sharing the very same waters, perhaps largely due to the fact that so many people who work in the port also own boats, and sail recreationally and competitively themselves.

Hobcaw Yacht Club's constitution opens with "the purpose of the club shall be to promote sailing, seamanship, and other recreational activities" Each year Cameron's committee and the club hosts a sailing camp that thousands of children have participated in over the years. They evaluate their efforts and strive to improve the lessons annually.

They topped out at 90 kids last summer. Their sailing camp is open to members and non-members. Cameron said his committee is more interested in maintaining the quality of the program than growing the numbers and want to continue as a premier developmental sailing program for the kids who want to sail in later years.

The board meeting at Hobcaw Yacht Club is not a public meeting but as the town moves forward with this exploratory mission to find a sailing venue, the *Moultrie News* hopes the subject will get the due process it deserves.

This is a town with lot of coast line. It is imperative we find a safe and suitable location for youth sailing, wherever that may be. It is an important decision that must be made with full bodied information.

Confronting policy

The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) works with a policy that has as a goal of the complete removal of all sandbags that now litter the Isle of Palms beachfront. OCRM wanted all sandbags off the beach by Dec. 1, 2007.

An earlier stated OCRM policy confronts this latest policy and acts as a time consuming obstacle that inhibits timely realization of the goal.

The stage was set for the ambiguity that results and serves as the defining mark of what has been sown by the two policies. It happened on Sullivan's Island first.

It starts with a letter from my representative Ben A. Hagood, dated Feb. 26, 2004 in response to a concern of mine about sandbag litter on the Sullivan's Island beach. Representative Hagood wrote to me promptly about the use of sandbags on critically eroded Sullivan's Island beachfront property. He stated clearly that the policy of OCRM was to allow the use of sandbags if an oceanfront structure remained imminently threatened by erosion for an indefinite period of time. Fast forward to Dec. 15, 2005. On this day I received a letter from Wanda C. Crotwell, DHEC assistant to the commissioner for External Affairs.

Ms. Crotwell reiterated nicely the conclusion passed on to me by Rep. Hagood. Her conclusion was the same though expressed somewhat differently... "the use of sandbags is allowed as long as the property continues to be directly threatened by beach erosion."

The remnants of sandbag litter remain on Sullivan's Island to this day and many of us viewed the summer sandbag disaster on the Isle of Palms. Meanwhile DHEC-OCRM pursues the goal of removal of all sandbags from the Isle of Palms beach.

Why has it taken so long? Note the ambiguity. Holders of OCRM's now expired emergency orders know full well what OCRM's policy consists of. Beachfront property is still threatened and can remain threatened if sandbags are removed. One policy clashes with another and some of us take the view that it is contrived ambiguity aimed at time consumption. If enough time is consumed all aspects of who-pays-what for a beach nourishment project can be settled, and considerable uncertainty surrounds the project start-up date.

Watch the actions and inactions of the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to see more confusion.

USACE rightfully noted this past summer that thousands of small shredded sandbags washed into the Atlantic basin. Their response was to issue a permit that allowed larger sandbags that shred only in their hundreds. Some of these hundreds now are embedded in the Isle of Palms beach face.

Taxpayers deserve better treatment from the USACE regulatory agency. To my knowledge, no additional permits have been issued from their office, while more large sandbags have been installed since the corp's permit expired on Sept. 30, 2007.

We see no confusion in one aspect of the OCRM goal to rid the public beach of sandbag litter. No one is confused about the long stretch of time it will

take to clean up the beach.

Louis C. Tisdale
Mount Pleasant

Adopt a pet

About 21/2 years ago a wonderful animal came into my life. It wasn't a prize winning horse or anything that would be considered pure bred. This animal was a skinny little Pit Bull that had been abused so bad it's hard to even talk about.

He had cigarette burns on his face, scares all over his legs, and a bad case of mange. He was either abandoned or escaped torture and wandered into a back yard in Lexington County.

Little did he know he found a sanctuary that saved his existence and forever changed the lives of many people. By chance, the owner of that home just happened to see him as he was in the yard. He invoked her own love of dogs and this mangy looking mutt was taken in.

At that time my girlfriend and I were looking to get a dog. I grew up with Golden Retrievers and wanted to get another one. She wanted to go to a pound or dog rescue. I was hesitant to go that route because I had always had popular breed dogs. But I was willing to check out the options. Coincidentally she received a call from her family that they had taken in a stray Pit Bull.

She saw him first and absolutely fell in love with him. I saw him several days later and my feelings were the same. He was brought down to Charleston and surprisingly given a clean bill of health other than the skin disorder. We named him Charlie and he has become a huge part of many people's lives.

Charlie has a smile that never stops. He gets so excited to see you when you get home or if you just call his name. He now has a beautiful auburn colored coat and a black German Shepherd style mask. I hate that his breed gets so much bad press.

From Michael Vick and his horrendous crimes to Dorchester County where a little boy was killed by a dog late last year — it's not the dogs fault. It's how he's treated by humans who either show it love and affection or abuse it and teach it to kill.

I feel the anxiety of people sometimes when I walk Charlie. If they only took the time to see how sweet he is they would never back away. But unfortunately, cold hearted people have taken that away and Charlie will always have that discrimination against him.

This past Sunday while in between football games I happened upon a dog competition on Channel 4 that made me emotional after watching it.

The frisbee competition was on. It is normally reserved for acrobatic fast dogs like Border Collies. However the ultimate winner was a rescued 3-year-old Pit Bull.

They interviewed the owner with the dog afterwards and you could feel the emotion in his voice and then see the smile and admiration from a dog that otherwise would have been put down if it wasn't for the caring nature of her owner. If more people would take this chance, the stigma of Pit Bulls would change and people would realize that all they want is a loving and warm home.

Unfortunately my girlfriend and I have since broken up but our love for Charlie has never changed. He now has two homes where he receives the attention and emotion that was so vacant in the early months of his life. As we both move forward with our lives it's still up in the air where Charlie will be for good. However, whatever the decision is, we both know that Charlie has brought so much joy to us and both of our families.

By reading this I just hope that people take the chance on a stray or an animal at a rescue organization or the Charleston Animal Society.

You never know until you try it and believe me, the animal feels the love more than you can imagine.

Brian Conn
Mount Pleasant

Wake up America

This is a very important time in America.

As we listen to all the candidate speeches and promises made, we must carefully decide which candidate will straighten out the issues we face. As I meet and talk to people I am struck by the parallel concerns we all share.

Number one with most is this unending war in Iraq with predications of longer years to promote "democracy." Do the Iraqi's really want democracy? Is this sacrifice of American lives and dollars (incidentally borrowed from China) worth it?

Our education process is flawed and promises made do not seem to end the violence and unrest. Students have a harder and harder time getting through the changes in programs and stress of the environment. Shouldn't we be addressing and solving this problem with our youth?

Of even more concern, our health care system is not working. Every American should be covered. Every American should be able to afford insurance, and no one should be turned away. We cannot afford to cover all children?

I question our government leaders when we turn away from the real problems to mind other countries business. Should we not be addressing issues which affect our citizens. We are now finally told that we are facing a recession. Tell the people who are paying ever rising prices on fuel. Tell the people who cannot pay to heat their houses.

Tell those soldiers coming home from the war that the war is worth it. The terrorists are still here. Illegal are still able to sneak into our country. Our youth are being killed or wounded every day. Tell them that America will provide for them the rest of their lives.

It is time that all America face the truth. We are going in the wrong direction. We must take time to carefully consider where we are going and stand up and be counted. The next election would be a good place to start. Think, consider your choices carefully, then vote.

When I hear on the news that our president is wearing an Arab robe, eating and partying with the Saudis, I realize again what the real goal at the White House is. Wouldn't you call that "money and oil"? I would.

Gwen Siegrist
Mount Pleasant

Moultrie News

EAST COOPER'S
WEEKLY COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER SINCE 1964

Published by Island Publications, Inc.
Vickey Boyd, *Publisher*
Sully Witte, *Editor*

What's On Your Mind?

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