

SGI Civic Club is gearing up for another successful fundraiser led by James Donald.

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Upcoming ISLAND EVENTS

SGI Lighthouse Full Moon Climbs

Feb 8 @ 5:45 - 7:30 pm March 9 @ 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm 850-927-7745 | www.stgeorgelight.org/events

Franklin County – February & March Dates BOCC Regular Meetings

Feb 18, Mar 3, 17 @ 9:00 am (Regular Meetings) Commission Meeting Room, Apalachicola

SGI BINGO

Every Tuesday through Mar @ 7 pm, SGI Firehouse

ANERR

Oyster Ecology 101, Feb 12 @ 12:30pm-4:00pm Living Shorelines for Residents, Feb 20 @ 2-4 pm Bay Friendly Landscaping, Mar 12 @ 1-3:30 pm Apalachicola Bay Estuary, Mar 27 12:30-4:00pm (850) 670-7708 or email anita.grove@dep.state.fl.us

SGI Tour of Homes & SGI Plantation Art Show

Feb 8 @ 10 am - 4 pm 850-927-7745 or www.sgiTourOfHomes.com

SGI Civic Club Meeting (3rd Thursday)

Feb 20, 2019 @ 6:30 pm, SGI Firehouse Speaker: Georgia Ackerman, Riverkeeper and Executive Director, Apalachicola Riverkeepers

SGI Chili Cook-Off, Golf Tournament, 5K Run, Chili Competition & Charity Auction

Mar 5, 2019 @ 9 am - 5 pm, Lighthouse Park

Second Annual SGI Civic Club Golf Tournament Charity Fundraiser

March 20, 2020 @ 9 am - 5 pm Contact jdonal278@gmail.com register at www.sgicivicclub.com/events.html

25th Annual Camp Gordon Johnston Days Veterans Parade & Dice Run

March 14-15 in Carrabelle contact: dbutler@campgordonjohnston.com

FOR A COMPLETE LISTING OF FRANKLIN COUNTY AREA EVENTS CLICK www.ApalachicolaBay.org



This popular activity continues to be the major fundraising effort of the Civic Club and is great fun for everyone. Bring a guest or two!

TO VOLUNTEER CONTACT:

Ben Mathewson at benz256@mac.com
Every Tues at the Firehouse at 7 pm.
Snacks and cold drinks available.

(No one under 18 may attend, under Florida Law.)

GREAT PAY! FULL BENEFITS! FREE LIQUOR!

Not really. But the Communications committee is looking for a few volunteers to assist our work. Ready to work on your creative computer skills? Join us as we learn about publishing software, creating effective images, and controlling the urge to slam your laptop on the floor when

IT JUST WON'T WORK! Maintaining electronic membership spreadsheets for mailings through a commercial vendor is not as easy as it sounds. Oddly, shouting at the screen does not appear to have any appreciable impact on the computer's or the vendor's behavior.



To be truthful, the work is rewarding and gratifying when we hear someone say he or she learned about the island and its issues by reading the Civic Club newsletter. We proudly take a little credit for growth in membership, attendance, and volunteerism because we work so hard to keep you informed. So, what do you say? The beginning of a new decade sounds like a perfect time to take on the challenge of communications for the island we call paradise.



In need of nice items for the Chili Cookoff Auction. If you have something you would like to donate contact Kevin Delahanty, Fire Chief St. George Island Volunteer Fire Department @850-653-6657 or email: irishkevinsgi@gmail.com.

SAVE THE DATE!

- Registration: \$100.00 per player
- Foursome Best Ball Scramble
- Shotgun start @ 9:30 a.m. Pre round meeting 9:00 a.m. Registration open @ 8:30 a.m.
- On course prizes including a \$15,000 Hole In One On No.11 (\$7500 to the player, \$7500 to the SGIVFD)
- Lots of other on course prizes, Prizes for Win, Place and Show!, Range Balls, and Post Round Buffet

RSVP AND PRE-REGISTRATION

Please RSVP by February 15th to:
Bob Landiss @ 850-653-5437 or blandiss46@gmail.com
Or to: Greg Seidel (Head Pro St. James)
@ 850-697-9606 or gseidel@kempersports.com

Mail checks to: Bob Landiss, SGICC 624 West Bayshore Drive St. George Island, FL 32328 (Make check payable to: St. George Island Chili Cookoff)





Golf Tournament Brings Challenge and Fun



Friends of the Island, here's a Civic Club fund-raising activity that promises an opportunity to do what we do best: Giving Back while Having Fun! The Second Annual SGI Civic Club Golf Tournament and Charity Fundraiser will be held on March 20 at the beautiful

St. James Bay. This is a Civic Club activity that requires golfers, volunteers and sponsors and is a major fundraising activity to carry on the work of the club.

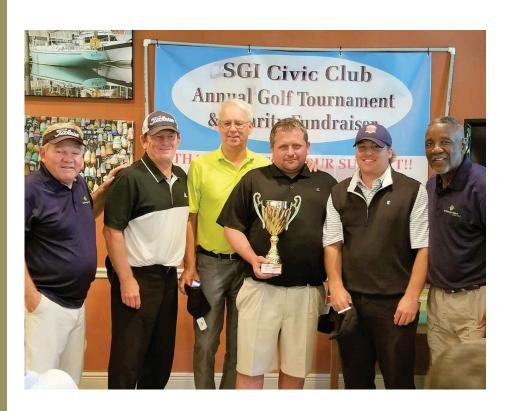
Many levels of corporate & individual financial support are available. See the website to learn more: http://sgicivicclub.com/sponsorships.html We also need non-golfers to assist as greeters, beer cart drivers, judges for the putting contest or closest to the pin event, and the inevitable fan base to cheer the golfers along. We need you to sign up now, so contact jdonal278@gmail.com today.

Don't forget that with an additional donation, the Civic Club offers specialty logo items, including golf shirts, ball caps and coffee cups. We hope all the players and volunteers will be suitably dressed! Check out this website http://sgicivicclub.com/pro-shop.html for advance orders.

One hundred percent of the proceeds raised through this event will be distributed to the charitable organizations that the Civic Club membership chooses later in the calendar year. For more than forty years, the SGI Civic Club has supported the community through our fundraising and our volunteers. Together, we make the island better.







2020 Membership Dues Are Due Now!

The St George Island Civic Club has over 600 members on its electronic roster. We'd like to update that to ensure that we are providing our newsletter and our monthly updates only to persons who are interested in hearing about the latest happenings which affect us all on the island and who want to participate through their memberships.

During the past year, members of the Civic Club attended each of the twice-monthly County Commission meetings. Because of our positive working relationship, the Club worked with the Franklin County Commission and staff to assist with replacing electrical outlets on Franklin Blvd, replacing damaged or illegible signage, improving the frequency of trash pick-up along the bridge, and maintaining the landscaping along Franklin Blvd. Also through that collaboration, we assisted with the development of a state beautification grant for the entrance to the island, a RESTORE planning grant to address the storm water flooding in the downtown area, a county planning grant for designing new updated restrooms at Lighthouse Park and a commitment of funding of that design from the TDC, and a county commitment for resurfacing the basketball court with the addition of a pickle ball court. Our special events for members included the First Annual Civic Club Charitable golf event, the hosting of a variety of local officials and public speakers to provide information to our members, the October beach front Luau, the Annual 'Lighting of the Palms' and Golf Cart Lighted Parade, and the December holiday party for our members. Most importantly, we were able to provide thousands of dollars in financial support and volunteer hours to a variety of not-for-profit entities which help our area's most needy families. Just imagine what we are going to accomplish together in 2020!

2020 Memberships Dues—\$20 Per Person

NAME #1

Pay online at www.sgiCivicClub.com/membership.html.

You can bring this form to a monthly meeting to pay with cash, check or credit card or mail a check to: St. George Civic Club, PO Box 451, Eastpoint, FL 32328 or

FΜΔΙΙ

NAME #2	EMAIL	
MAILING ADDRESS		
CITY:	STATE	ZIP
CHECK ONE: NEW MEMBERSHIP	RENEWING MEMBERSHIP	
CHECK TOTAL (Not tax deductible): □ \$	20.00 🗆 \$40.00	
2020 Tax Deductible Donat Donate online at www.sgicivic		
GIFT ITEMS: ☐ MUG ☐ CAP (CIRCL	E ONE - navy or stone)	
☐ MEN'S GOLF SHIRT: MEN: CIRCLE ONE	E: MD, LG, XL COLOR CIRCLE	ONE: navy or white
$\ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ $	MD, LG COLOR CIRCLE ONE: b	olue or white
PURPOSE OF DONATION: GENERAL	L OTHER	
AMOUNT: \$		







As the island's oldest, not-for-profit organization dedicated solely to the welfare of the island, the Civic Club is now a 501c3 charitable entity. That means your charitable donations are tax deductible.

For donations of \$100 or more, the Civic Club provides logo items of modest value so the entire donation is deductible. Dues are not deductible because of the variety of events provided through the Club for members' benefit.

The Civic Club supports the SGI Tour of Homes — to benefit SGI LightHouse.

The SGI Plantation Clubhouse will host the John Spoher Photography Exhibit and the Franklin County Kids Art Contest as part of the homes tour. The Tag Art winners' contest sponsored by Franklin County Tax Collector, Rick Watson, will be on display during the tour.

At the art and photo exhibits, there will be a raffle to benefit the Franklin County schools' art department. Three tickets for \$5 to win one of John's beautiful coastal photographs—called "Sunrise, Two Mile Channel". Both of these exhibits will be on display through March 14, 2020.



2020 Plans Include Opportunities to Make a Difference



President Jim Morris announced February as the month that the SGI Civic Club Board will establish its proposed 2020 budget and annual goals. Article 2 of the By-Laws lays out the objectives of the forty year old association: promoting social interaction; providing a forum for discussing issues that interest and impact island residents and homeowners; supporting the SGI Volunteer Fire Department/First Responders; supporting other community interests; providing lead-

ership for island improvements; playing a role in preserving and/or enhancing the natural beauty and ecology of the island; and taking concerted action on matters which will in any way affect the welfare of the island.

Many goals continue from earlier decisions or tradition. Pursuing the long-term goals of SGI 2025 Vision and fundraising for charitable contributions for area needs are two examples. Within those efforts lie member opportunities to shape the details. Do you have suggestions for fundraising? Want to assist with the golf tournament in March or weekly winter bingo? What about those ideas you have on an approach appropriate for our donations?

The year 2020, as we all know, brings local and state elections (as well as something going on at the national level, right?). Our local Constitutional officers are up for re-election as well as three of our county commissioners, including Ricky Jones, who represents the island and is scheduled to become the next commission chairman. Both federal and state houses of representatives hold elections this year. For the first time in a decade, the District 3 Florida Senate seat is open, with the retirement of long time legislator Bill Montford. These local and state offices have an immediate and powerful impact on Franklin County. The Civic Club again will host candidate forums to introduce the SGI Civic Club and you to these valuable political leaders. Would you be interested in helping with these events?

Our third-Thursday in the month dinner meetings provide social interaction; relevant information for our members; and opportunities to become involved. Each month requires a number of hosts who can set up the buffet and tidy the area after dinner. The pot-luck dinners are designed to be minimum effort with a delicious and enjoyable return. Ready to be a host? Do you know of entertaining and informative speakers who have something to share with our membership?

Many individuals have praised the newsletter created by the Communications Committee. But that publication, as well as the website and periodic announcements, are all created by volunteers who have taken the time and energy to become involved. We need more willing people to help in any way.

Where can you serve your community? Is this the year you say "yes." If tasks within the Civic Club don't appeal, many other opportunities abound. Let President Morris and the Board hear from you.

Earn extra income while helping the Franklin County community.



Everyone is invited to apply, including:

- Retirees College Students
- People looking for temporary work
- People looking for a second job
- People available to work flexible hours, which may include weekends, days, or evenings

What is the pay?

Pay varies but the average in Franklin County is \$15-\$17/hour plus expenses. Some training is required. Pay checks are weekly.

Who can get hired?

- Must be 18 years old or more
- Have a social security number
- Have an email and Internet access
- Pass a background check
- Valid Driver's license and access to a vehicle for some positions

For more information visit www.2020census.gov/jobs

Shape your future START HERE >



Everyone must be counted in 2020. The future of Franklin County depends on it.

Beginning in March 2020, you will receive a notice in the mail to complete the Census. For the first time ever, the Census Bureau will accept responses online and by phone. Responding should take less time than it takes to finish your morning coffee. Although April 1 is considered National Census Day, you may respond as soon as you receive the mail. In May the Bureau will begin following up in person with households that haven't responded to the Census. No one will come to your house if you have already responded.

The Census helps determine the federal and state funding for health care, education, roads, disaster relief, veterans, seniors and early childhood. And those numbers stick until 2030. Funding follows the numbers, not the need. Rural communities like Franklin rely heavily on state and federal funding. You represent thousands in aid for those programs. Please be counted!

Where do I respond if I also live in another community?

You should be counted at your "usual" residence, which is the place where you live and sleep at least 51% of the time. You make that determination yourself. If you cannot determine a place where you live "most of the time," you should be counted where you are staying on Census Day April 1. If you are in a transitory location, such as recreational vehicle in the State Park and traveling the rest of the year with no usual home elsewhere, you are counted where you are on April 1. We hope you will be in Franklin County, because we need your numbers!

What information is requested to be counted?

You will complete basic information about the people living in your household on April 1. That's all. The Census will NEVER ask for 1. Social Security numbers; 2. Bank or credit card account information; 3. Money or donations; and 4. Anything on behalf of a political party. If you receive a mailing, phone call, or visit from anyone seeking this personal information, you should contact Franklin County Sheriff A. J. Smith.

Look-Back/Look-Ahead: SGI 2025 Vision

In late 2017 the Civic Club hosted guest speaker Alan Pierce, who served as the county RESTORE coordinator and is the retired county manager. The audience was stunned when Alan explained why the island seemed to receive so few projects from the county, while other



unincorporated areas had recreational facilities, water front parks, new public restrooms. The "island" simply never asked for anything. Certainly, individual islanders made complaints and requests, but there had been no consensus proposal from the island in many years. Worse yet, when commissioners attempted to answer an individual's request, other islanders inevitably spoke out against making that improvement.

In 2018 the Civic Club board, led by then-president James Donald, decided to make a difference. Under its By-Laws, the Civic Club had all the authority it needed to put together not just one, but a list of proposed projects that would improve the island for both residents and visitors. The idea of SGI 2025 Vision was born. The president appointed an infrastructure committee, led by Michael O'Connell, who was next in line to be president, to begin assembling ideas. To make the task manageable, the group focused solely on the designated commercial district, a 70-acre parcel that runs from beach to bay, and from 3rd street east to west because that is the entrance to the island and contains its most valuable commercial and publicly-owned asset. In addition, the iconic Cape St George Lighthouse, a project initiated and completed by volunteers, had already added a sophistication and focus previously lacking from the island center.

The committee not only had ideas but researched for state and federal funding sources and calculated rough cost estimates. To be as inclusive as possible, the Civic Club created a SGI2025 Vision website and invited all interested parties, not just Civic Club members, to join the discussions of what projects would improve the quality of life on the island without damaging its unique characteristics of a natural and laid back community.

After a year of public meetings resulting in a consensus proposal, the Civic Club created a ballot for members of the club and invited non-members to join in order to have a direct voice in the island's future. All the items on the SGI 2025 Vision ballot passed by large margins. The top priorities of addressing stormwater problems and creating new public restrooms became the agenda of the Government Relations Committee for 2019.

Unique timing for grants and available funding permitted other projects to move up the timeline. The county had the opportunity to apply for a state beautification grant for the causeway portion of SR 300, known as Franklin Blvd. The portion within the commercial district will need to wait until the stormwater improvements are accomplished since the medians

Continued on next page >

Status Report

Civic Club 2025 Projects

- 1. Basketball Court Resurfacing/Pickle Ball Court on or around Feb. 10 paid for within existing county funds, Parks & Recreation Department. Already awarded to contractor with experience and expertise. Civic Club will acquire a portable pickle ball net. Play should begin in late February.
- 2. New Island Public Restrooms construction beginning around April paid for by TDC (tourism bed tax) funds, up to \$500,000. Existing restrooms, originally constructed by island volunteers, will remain in place during construction. Project will be publicly bid. Design being done through existing county funds by Dewberry Engineering.
- 3. SR300/Franklin Blvd Beautification construction to begin around March paid for by Florida Department of Transportation grant to county. Will be publicly bid. Plans include adding durable plantings and palms along east and west sides of Causeway and first median at entrance to island. The area will receive irrigation and restoration of storm water swales. The improvement of the east side parking area is a later project.
- 4. Engineering and Design for Storm Water Approval of grant for design and engineering is expected from US Treasury in February. Grant will use RESTORE (BP) funds. Finished design should be final later this year, when county will determine how to proceed. Funds to implement storm water prevention constitute another grant and will come from future RESTORE funds, if county approves.

> Look Back/Look Ahead - Continued from previous page

of Franklin with its detention ponds are a critical element in that function. The county had planned and delayed for many years the resurfacing of the basketball court at Lighthouse Park. The project was moved to a higher priority within the county's list, and the Civic Club requested that a pickle ball court be added as an overlay to the resurfaced court. This was not the multi-court facility planned in the Vision; but the single court would serve as residents and visitors become familiar with the highly popular sport.

The Civic Club expresses great appreciation for the accomplishments of 2019 made possible by Commissioner Ricky Jones.

While the Civic Club is proud of its role in bringing consensus around certain goals and moving that agenda through the county process, the individual most responsible for shepherding these projects is District 1 County Commissioner Ricky Jones. While a community can organize, do its homework, and present its case to government, the value of an advocate in a position of influence is immeasurable. The Civic Club expresses great appreciation for the accomplishments of 2019 made possible by Commissioner Ricky Jones.

Projects for Pursuing – 2020

The next priorities, in order of popularity by Civic Club membership, include boat ramp re-engineering; fishing pier restrooms construction; Franklin Blvd beautification (to be accomplished when storm water project is completed); recycling improvements; and upgraded children's playground with shade. These projects all depend on recommendations by the county and availability of funding.

Want to become involved in making improvements to the island? Contact Michael O'Connell, past president, at poconnell1414@gmail.com.



Safety is the greatest concern at the fishing pier boat ramp - a popular place for residents and visitors alike.

SGI 2025 Vision Projects Listed by order of highest percentage of votes:

Roadways, stormwater runoff, sidewalks, alleyways
Status: RESTORE grant for Design work awaiting approval US Treasury; expected winter 2020.
2. Lighthouse Park Restrooms 94%
Status: Design work underway; construction expected April 2020
3. Boat ramp re-engineering 93%
4. Fishing Pier Restrooms 91%
5. Franklin Blvd Beautification 86%
Status: Beautification taking place Spring 2020 is only affecting causeway; Franklin Blvd requires new grant after storm water is addressed.
6. Improvements to recycling 86%
7. Children's Playground 84%
8. Causeway Improvements 82%
Status: modest improvements taking place 2020; more to be accomplished, such as east-side parking area
9. Additional Parking Area along Gulf Beach Drive79%
10. Waste Water Study 74 %
11. Lighthouse Park Fitness Loop 64%
12. Community Center 57%
13. Pickle Ball Court 56%
Status: Because the resurfacing of the basketball court could include creation of a pickle ball court without significant investment, a single court

was added to plans 2020.





Popular Sport Now Available on the Island

Pickleball is a paddleball sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton, and ping pong. Two or four players use solid paddles made of wood or composite materials to hit a perforated polymer ball, similar to a Whiffle Ball, over a net. A group of families in the mid-1960s created the game as a way of including all ages in family play.

As the fastest-growing sport in the nation, pickleball has become so popular that churches, parks and recreational departments are now adding facilities to their sports programs. St George Island will have its first public pickle ball court by the end of February. St George Plantation, which has had pickleball for several years, converted a tennis court to a three-court pickleball facility last year because of demand from the growing number of players.

Pickleball is a great introductory sport; the rules of the game are simple and the motions are easier on the knees and shoulders than other sports. The game, however, can be challenging, fast-paced and competitive. The sport now involves regular national competitions with indoor and outdoor courts.

According to the USA Pickleball Association (USAPA), the game is popular because it is ideal for all skill levels. Pickleball is also a social sport. With groups of players rotating into the short games, there is time for conversation and rest. It is also considered one of the healthier sports because it does not typically put excessive strains on a body.

The portable net at the Lighthouse Park court is furnished by the Civic Club as part of our contributions to island improvements. Player equipment is available for purchase at local stores that sell outdoor equipment and also online.



All photos on this page are stock - shown for reference only.

January Speaker Helps Membership Understand Property Taxes

Franklin County Property Appraiser Rhonda Skipper outlined her duties and responsibilities in ascertaining fair valuation of all property, real and personal, for the purposes of taxation. The "market" value of a property is based on the real estate market; it's based on the price people are willing to purchase or sell real estate at that time. The Property Appraiser establishes the value for tax purposes accordingly by studying the real estate transactions in detail. At least once every three years, the staff visits and inspects properties for this valuation. However, individuals can request a valuation when changes in the neighborhood or with the home have occurred.

Ms. Skipper touched upon the eligibility requirements for establishing a Homestead Exemption, the most popular of the exemptions from taxes that the law provides. This \$25,000 reduction in the taxable value of the home is applicable only to a full time residence, including residence on January 1. Owners can have only one "full time residence" even though they may own a home in another state. Homes for which this exemption is claimed may not be rented for any portion of the year. Several other categories of individuals may be exempted from having to pay all or some of their property taxes, including permanently disabled and widows/ widowers. Members of the audience peppered the Property Appraiser with questions, most related to their personal situation. Ms. Skipper encouraged the membership to review her website https://franklincountypa.net/ or to visit the office about personal circumstances.

Born and raised in Apalachicola, Ms. Skipper went to work for the Property Appraiser's Office in 1990, earning her way up through the office ranks to Chief Deputy. She was elected as County Property Appraiser first in 2012. She has been elected "unopposed" since. Ms. Skipper's Chief Deputy Casey Nash attended the dinner as a guest. President Jim Morris pointed out to the attendees that Ms. Skipper is the rare guest speaker who brought a covered dish to share, a delicious Brunswick Stew in this case. Reports are that Ms. Skipper took home an empty dish.

Finally, President Morris continued the Civic Club tradition of honoring the guest speaker with two children's books that will be donated to the Eastpoint Franklin County Library in Ms. Skipper's name. Appropriately, the two books are titled "Taxes, Taxes! Where the Money Goes" and "Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday."



Property Appraiser Rhonda Skipper with SGI Civic Club President, Jim Morris

SGI CIVIC CLUB 2020 BOARD MEMBERS

President: Jim Morris jim.morr98@yahoo.com

Vice-President: Bill Mills generalmillsiv@gmail.com

Secretary: Stacy Pierce Stacy.pierce@icloud.com

Treasurer: Carol McCormick carolflys@gmail.com

Past Pres: Michael O'Connell MikeOconnell@sgiCivicClub.com

At-Large: Erin Griffith erinhalegriffith@yahoo.com

At-Large: Phyllis Lewis pj_hideaway@fairpoint.net

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Winter Bingo: Ben Mathewson benz256@mac.com

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