



THE ISLANDER



The Chili CookOff Board Donates this year's profit of \$100k to Volunteer Fire Department. L-R Mason Bean, Pinki Jackel, Ben Mathewson, Chief Kevin Delahanty, Sheryl Clous, Tom Moses and Kara Landiss.

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Click to Join Now >> www.sgiCivicClub.com/membership.html

Upcoming ISLAND EVENTS

SGI 4th of July Parade (see map pg 12)
Lineup @ 11 am, Parade @ noon

Franklin Board of County Commissioners Meetings

BOCC Regular Meetings
July 6, 20, Aug 3, 17 @ 9 am

SGI Civic Club Regular Meeting ★
July 15, Aug 19, Sep 16 @ 6:30 pm
SGI Firehouse on East Pine Street

St. George Island Lighthouse

Sunset & Full Moon Climb
June 24 @ 8:30-10:30 pm
July 23 @ 8:30-10:30 pm
Aug 22 @ 7:45-9:45 pm

ANERR - Now Open

Tues-Sat @ 9 am- 4 pm

SGI Civic Club 2021 Golf Tournament & Charity Fundraiser

October 15, 2021

RENEW
— or —
JOIN

Why it makes a difference.

by Mason Bean
PAGE 13



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



SGI Civic Club Monthly Meetings Back. All Are Welcome!

The Civic Club has fully resumed the monthly general membership meetings including our traditional community meal. The May meeting was held on May 20th and the guest speaker was Ricky Jones. Ricky represents St. George Island as District 1 Commissioner on the Franklin County Board of Commissioners. Ricky shared his perspectives on SGI's current state of affairs as well as the future challenges facing our community. See his comments below. Thanks to Ricky for sharing his time with us!



Ricky Jones

Statement by Commissioner Ricky Jones, District 1

I appreciated the opportunity to attend the 1st regular SGI Civic Club meeting in over a year. I would like to share with you some of the matters discussed at that meeting. First of all, the County Commission meetings are once again open to the public and you are all invited to attend in person on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month, at 9 am. I hope to see you there.

I have been working on a document that clearly states what citizens can expect about their ability to communicate with their local government and their representatives when decisions are being made. This includes codifying policies and procedures that have been previously adopted by the past Commissions and some new ones, including making it easier to receive public comments appropriately. This also includes providing online a complete meeting packet, with back up materials, so the public will have an understanding of the topic to be discussed and possible action to be taken. Citizens have a right to be heard for any item not listed on the agenda but considered important to the speaker, county items on the agenda, and certainly before any action is taken by the Commission, even if a member of the Commission brings up a matter not on the agenda. (Even if the item is deemed as administrative in nature or considered to be an emergency.) As your representative and the current chairman, I will continue to keep the meetings on task as we take care of your business.

Also, be on the lookout for a public workshop on Code Enforcement to be held soon. The series of 5 workshops will be conducted across the county. The workshops will be used to guide our discussions toward addressing our County-wide need for Code Enforcement. It was discussed at some length during the question and answer time during the Civic Club meeting of what might be done to enforce turtle friendly lighting.

In addition to these things, Franklin County is moving toward forming an Economic Development Council. I believe this council will spur a much needed economic diversification for Franklin County and its future. One essential element, which I am pursuing now, includes access for everyone to high speed internet service.

Additionally, I am working toward an additional project for to St. George Island — a dog park. Public parking continues to be addressed.

Thank you again for inviting me to be your first Guest Speaker of the new year. Please follow my Facebook for current activities around the District: [Ricky Jones Franklin County Commissioner | Facebook](#). You can send me an email at ricky@franklincountyflorida.com.

Superintendent Steve Lanier Speaks to June 17 Civic Club General Meeting

Elected in Fall 2020, the twenty-six year Navy veteran Steve Lanier took over the Franklin County School District as superintendent with little time for formal preparation. He ran for the elected post, after retiring and working locally in other county positions, because he felt his leadership background could help him address the long-standing problems that have characterized the district. Those local barriers to a successful system include teacher and principal turnover, economically disadvantaged student population, and the flight of better students to neighboring county systems.

Under Lanier's leadership the county was able to attract a Junior ROTC program in partnership with Wakulla Schools. Under the requirements of the program, Franklin could not qualify alone. The ROTC program is widely regarded and has proven a stepping stone to college scholarships, careers, and valuable leadership training. He is also continuing to expand workforce/career training programs to provide profitable, career alternatives to the university-track for junior and senior high students. Adding another goal for the county, in partnership

with the Board of County Commissioners and other local entities, Lanier intends to develop adult education opportunities using the new high school vocational facilities. Finally, Lanier is placing emphasis on discipline within the system to ensure that all students feel safe and secure in the educational setting.

The Superintendent encouraged the Civic Club members to consider becoming personally involved with our local schools, which offer a variety of opportunities for adults to support both individual students and the system in total. From assisting with landscaping around school grounds and athletic facilities to reading in class to younger students or mentoring in science or math, volunteer opportunities abound for islanders to give back. Reach out with an idea for how you might serve to Morgan Thompson, HR Specialist, 850-670-2810, ext 4128. mthompson@franklincountyschools.org



Steve Lanier



Civic Club members and guests Sam Fortunas, Aleah Siprell Stein, and Rachel Fogarty-Oleson visit with Steve Lanier, Superintendent of Schools, during the Social time at the monthly club dinner.

Q&A

Regarding Franklin County

“Bed Tax” INCREASE

The Franklin County Commission recently approved an increase in the bed tax from 2% to 3%.

Counties may levy a tourist development tax or “bed tax” as a percent of the total charge (county rates vary) for the short term lease or rental of living accommodations in any hotel, apartment hotel, motel, resort motel, apartment, apartment motel, roominghouse, recreational vehicle park, mobile home park, or condominium for a term of six months or less.

The funds are to be used for Tourist Development Activities. This tax is collected by the state Department of Revenue, not local government.

You can access the Tax Information Publication at this address:

https://floridarevenue.com/taxes/tips/Documents/TIP_21A01-06.pdf

Q. Who is the Tourist Development Council (TDC)?

A. The TDCs, which exist in nearly every Florida county, were created by Florida Law as a way for counties to have local control over local revenues generated by short term rental bookings. By law, the TDC has nine members who are 3 locally elected officials, 3 representatives of tourist-related businesses, and 3 collectors of the local rentals tax. Currently, William “Buck” Bolden, St George Island resident and property owner of multiple rental homes, is one of the nine appointed members. Commissioner Ricky Jones, District 1, which includes SGI and Eastpoint, is the chair. Other members come from across the county. The TDC is an advisory committee to the Franklin County Commission on how to spend our “bed tax” revenues. The county commissioners make final decisions as well as appoint members to the TDC.

Q. When and where does the TDC meet?

A. The TDC meets the second Wednesday of every month at 2 pm currently at the County Courthouse Annex (where the county commission meets) on Forbes St in Apalachicola. In August, the TDC will relocate to its usual meeting location at the Eastpoint Visitor Center on Hwy 98. Live meetings are available on Zoom. The website is Franklin County Tourist Development Council — Administration (floridasforgottencoast.com) Minutes and annual budgets from 2007 can be found there as well as comprehensive lists of funded projects on the island and elsewhere.

Q. How is the Bed Tax used?

A. Nearly 40% of revenues must be spent toward “out of area” tourism promotion, by state law. The remainder is used for local projects that enhance tourism infrastructure. Less than 9% is spent on administration. The additional percentage of collections will provide significantly more dollars for capital projects that help to accommodate our growing tourist population while improving the quality of life for residents.

Q. What are examples of tourism infrastructure previously funded?

A.

- County-owned Historic Coombs Armory, in Apalachicola, which will be marketed as a wedding and convention venue.
- Land Acquisition and renovation for the Buddy Ward Maritime Heritage Museum, west of Apalachicola
- Carrabelle restroom renovation
- SGI bathrooms rebuild.
- SGI playground equipment recently replaced
(TDC funds were not used for Island Park in Carrabelle)

Q. Is Bed Tax spent on operations in addition to infrastructure?

A. Yes. Bed tax dollars pay for countywide daily beach trash collection, bridge cleanup, restroom maintenance, boardwalk maintenance, mobi-mats, tourism-signage, visitor centers, to name ongoing activities. In addition, the TDC provides operational grants to museums, such as the SGI Lighthouse, and promotional grants for special events, such as the SGI Lighting of the Palms.

Q. Why did the county increase the tax from 2% to 3% on May 18th?

A. At 2%, Franklin County has the lowest rate of bed tax in the state. Particularly since the decline in the seafood industry, tourism has increasingly become the major industry for the county, representing more than \$75M a year, with tourism dollars supporting businesses and the public sector alike. According to the statewide tourism office, the Franklin TDC marketing played a major role in bringing short term renters back to the island as soon as the pandemic restrictions were lifted. The county commission recognizes that our current infrastructure is not adequate to support the increasing popularity of the county. The major source of revenue for the county is ad valorem taxes, and the county does not want to increase property taxes for tourism economic development when tourism can pay for itself.

Q. If SGI generates the majority of the bed tax, why don't we receive the majority of the money?

A. The 2004 ordinance creating Franklin TDC was adopted county-wide by voters to impose the fee on all short-term rentals and disperse it county wide. It would require a vote of all county voters to agree to a different distribution.

Q. Does the county have a specific plan for use of the additional TDC revenues that might be generated?

A. Since the county adopted the extra percent for a tourist development tax, the TDC is beginning to identify infrastructure projects and the public will have at least two opportunities for input at the TDC meeting and also at the Commission meetings. If future SGI Civic Club boards and general membership agree, the Civic Club will continue to advocate for improvements to the commercial district, per the SGI 2025 Vision. To date, the only infrastructure project in recent memory requested of the TDC was the restrooms, which were constructed this year. The Civic Club also advocated for additional operations dollars to go toward more bridge clean up.

“Bed Tax”
CONTINUED



**Forgotten Coast
Mobile App for your
mobile device**

This app provides beach conditions, upcoming events, and news articles and allows you to share events and places with friends and family. Download the free app from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.



**The Forgotten Coast
GET THE APP**



Jim Morris, SGI Civic Club President

Commissioners Appoint Morris to Critical County Post

On Tuesday, June 15, the Board of County Commissioners appointed Civic Club President Jim Morris to Franklin County Planning & Zoning Commission, representing Ricky Jones' District 1, which includes Eastpoint and St George Island. Jim replaces another Civic Club member and islander Lon Wilkens, who resigned for health reasons. Jim and his wife Barbara moved to SGI in 2013 after a career spanning 48 years working in the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East in both the private and public sectors, most recently with the FBI. Jim says he accepted the honor of serving in the post "in an effort to aid in the preservation" of our local culture, ecology and natural beauty. Aware of the pressures on this growing community, Jim states he is aware of what a lack of strategic planning and overdevelopment can do to a once pristine coastline. "Franklin County is a unique and desirable place to live and vacation within the State of Florida," he declares, "It is my desire to keep it that way." With approximately half of new home construction occurring on St George Island, representation of the island on Planning and Zoning is more important than ever.

Also of Importance....

Newest Infrastructure Projects for SGI:

MRD & Associates was selected by the County Commission to design solutions, construction plans and permit applications for the "County Wide Dune Restoration Project," which will have its greatest area of impact on the island. Funding for the design and subsequent implementation, estimated to be \$1 to \$1.5 Million, comes from the county's share of federal RESTORE funds, which resulted from the settlement over the Deep Water Horizon Oil Spill in 2010. MRD & Associates is a coastal engineering firm specializing in resilient coastal planning from Destin. Work begins immediately, with actual implementation dependent on approval from U.S. Treasury.

Dewberry & Associates, of Port St Joe, is the highest ranked engineering firm competing for the contract to design and provide construction documents for remedying the storm water problems in the commercial district of St George Island. Also, a RESTORE project, the drainage effort is estimated to cost from \$3 to \$3.5 Million. Together these two projects represent the largest expenditure of RESTORE funds on the island.

Sheriff Work Crew Continues Bridge Cleanup

Sherriff A. J. (Tony) Smith has agreed to continue their contract during the next six months. Previously, the service had been provided by the private sector but the county was unable to obtain services through a qualified private vendor.

All local government meetings are televised to permit broad participation

Viewing and participating in county commission and other local government meetings important to our community can be accomplished in several ways: in person, on the phone, via Zoom or through livestream video. Each specific agenda has instructions for the most convenient approach. A popular option for the bi-monthly Board of County Commission meetings is the livestream link, at <https://facebook.com/forgottencoasttv>.

Look for new signage on bike path

The county road crew will be installing new signage on the bike path to ensure that no motorized vehicles mistakenly take that route.

Island Causeway Landscaping Maintenance is the responsibility of the contractor who installed the irrigation, landscaping and mulch—Lawns of Bay County—for a full year. The company is treating the weeds weekly during growing season. The plants installed on the corner of Franklin and East Gulf Beach Drive are thriving nicely because of the ongoing watering efforts Civic Club volunteers. Everyone reports: it's hot out there.

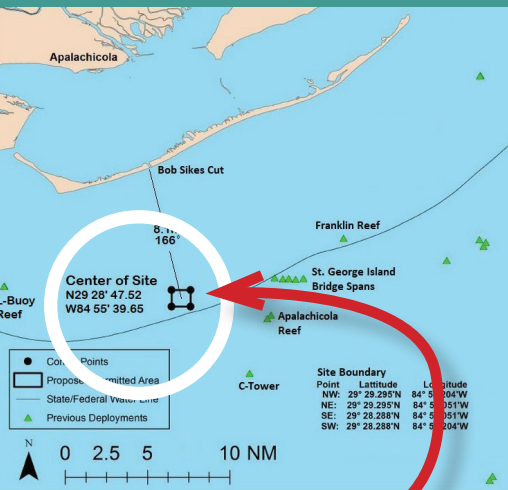
Calling Fisherman and Divers to new Buddy Ward Artificial Reef

After years in development, planning, and permitting from federal and state agencies, a third artificial reef is now under construction within the 9 mile boundary of state waters in proximity to Bob Sykes Cut. This exciting project, executed by the American Artificial Reef Association (AARA) and the Franklin County Board of County Commissioners, will attract a wide variety of fish, such as grouper and snapper, along with migratory fish, like King mackerel, and cobia. The AARA believes that the additional fishing and diving opportunities associated with the new reef will bring economic and recreational value to the community. Walter Marine of Orange Beach, AL, won the contract to deploy the artificial reef concrete components during the week of June 14. The late “Buddy” Ward was an Apalachicola native who created a successful seafood and trucking company that brought national attention to the area.

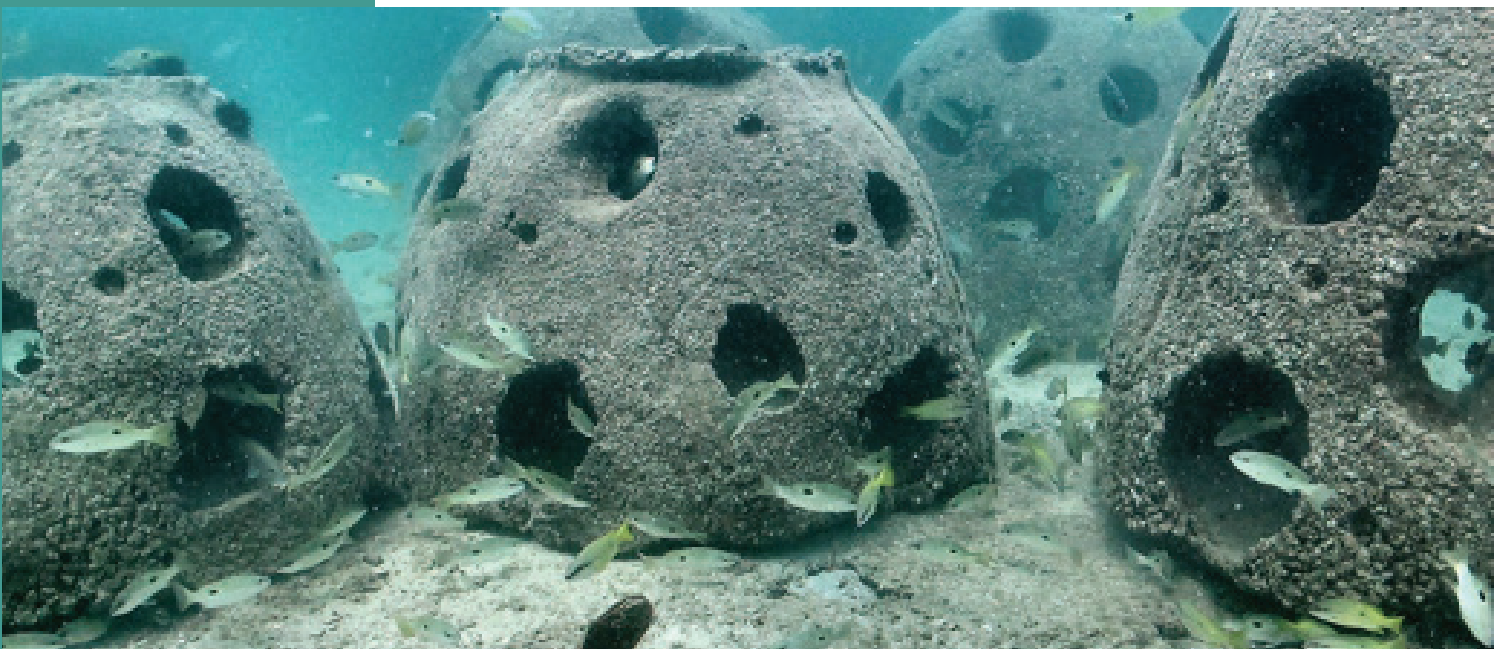
The new artificial reef is located approximately 8 nautical miles off shore, within sight of St George Island, at bearing 166 degrees from the Cut. The water depth is approximately 40.’ The reef is being constructed of at least twenty-five prefabricated reef modules or similar concrete structures, at least four feet tall and six feet wide, with a weight of at least two tons. The sections cannot have exposed metal frameworks within the marine grade concrete. The modules, or reef “balls,” are designed with multiple openings of various sizes to allow water circulation and provide appealing access for fish.

The Civic Club Communications Committee looks forward to future stories about the great sightings and catches at the Buddy Ward Artificial Reef. Photo of “reef balls” below courtesy of AARA

Safety flag used on location to alert others that a diver is below the surface of the water and to steer clear of their area.



Buddy Ward Artificial Reef location



ABSI Leads Pathway to Bay Recovery and Requests Volunteers

By Madelein Madhood, ABSI staff

In 2019, Florida State University was awarded funding for the Apalachicola Bay System Initiative (ABSI) by Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc, which administers funds generated in the aftermath of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The goal of ABSI is to gain insight into the causes of the oyster population demise, understand why the system is not recovering, and identify potential pathways to a healthy Bay ecosystem and oyster fishery. We want the community to be informed and engaged about the science and management decisions being made as the project moves forward. Currently, ABSI is looking for volunteers to help our scientists with sample processing and general lab work. ABSI is also developing in-person workshops following COVID safety guidelines. On September 16, ABSI will meet with the SGI Civic Club to discuss the project. Also, later this summer and fall, ABSI will be hosted by the Eastpoint Civic Association and ANERR for their SciCafé series. If you are interested in participating, volunteering with ABSI, or have questions and suggestions for the team, please visit the website at: marinelab.fsu.edu/absi or contact ABSI at fsucml-absi@fsu.edu.



ABSI Research Assistant Chris Matechik (left) and local fisherman Shannon Hartsfield (right) chat about experimental oyster restoration sites in Apalachicola Bay.



The decline in oyster populations may be symptomatic of an overall ecosystem change...

Why ABSI? Why Now?

Apalachicola is known for its oysters and the industry has thrived for over a century. However, oyster populations in Apalachicola Bay collapsed in 2012, and in 2013 the wild oyster harvest was declared a Federal Fishery disaster. This situation became so dire that in 2020, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) officially closed Apalachicola Bay to all harvest of wild oysters for five years. The decline in oyster populations may be symptomatic of an overall ecosystem change, which raises questions about the overall health of Apalachicola Bay.

To answer these questions, the ABSI approach is two-fold: develop science-based restoration and management strategies and engage the community to help develop and implement these plans. ABSI's research team has been making headway in collecting scientific data, working with local stakeholders, and conducting restoration experiments. Current research projects include:

Re-Entry Tags Are Must-Have Items For SGI Homeowners

Hurricanes and other weather emergencies can result in evacuations of our island. When that happens, law enforcement often closes the bridge to all but homeowners and their authorized guests who must have a “re-entry tag” issued by the county Emergency Management Office.

Each homeowner receives two paper re-entry tags, tied to an island address. The tags are not vehicle specific, and they no longer expire. Homeowners need a drivers’ license or form of identity that contains the island address. They may also need a secondary proof of ownership such as tax bill or power bill. Because the re-entry tags are designed to allow homeowners to check on their homes after an event, tags are not issued for vacant lots.

Applications for re-entry tags are available on the Franklin County Emergency Management website [Re-Entry Tags - Franklin County Emergency Management \(franklinemergencymanagement.com\)](#). Homeowners can also come in person to the office or send in the application via mail. Telephone number is

850-653-8977.

- Working with local oystermen to investigate the best areas and ways to conduct small-scale restoration experiments that can then inform large-scale reef restoration.
- Experimenting, within the laboratory setting, to determine survival, larval lifespan and behavior of oyster larvae under various environmental conditions.
- Mapping of the Bay to get current data on existing oyster reefs.
- Creating hydrologic models that can predict the environmental conditions (salinity, nutrients) in the Bay under different river flow scenarios.
- Constructing of an experimental hatchery to raise oysters for restoration experiments both in the lab and the Bay itself.

ABSI Community Advisory Board

To engage local stakeholders in the ABSI process, a Community Advisory Board (CAB) was established in the fall of 2019 to create a meaningful, consensus-building process for the development of a management and restoration plan. The 23 members of the CAB are comprised of commercial seafood harvesters and dealers, recreational guides and anglers, and aquaculture business owners, as well as representatives from natural resource agencies, local businesses, local government, and non-governmental organizations. Steve Rash, a local SGI businessman who owns Water Street Seafood, Inc., and former Civic Club president Michael O’Connell are two members on this board. With guidance from the CAB and input from stakeholders and the public, a science-informed ecosystem management and restoration plan focused on the recovery of Apalachicola Bay is being developed. The CAB has met 13 times and all meeting materials including agendas, presentations, summary reports, and video recordings of the meetings can be found on the website (marinelab.fsu.edu/absi/cab). ABSI has also hosted two Oystermen’s Workshops to work with and learn from local oystermen on suitable locations and materials for restoration and management alternatives. The management and restoration plan is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year. From there, the CAB will transition to helping ensure the plan gets implemented to fast track the recovery of the Bay.



The SGI Civic Club and all islanders wish Eastpoint Civic Association great success

in this challenging endeavor. We recognize the dedication required to sustain a long-term volunteer effort such as one to control and shape a community's future. To support this worthwhile effort, you may contact the association at info@eastpointfl.org. Please send tax deductible contributions to Eastpoint Civic Association, P. O. Box 317, Eastpoint, FL 32328.



Citizen Involvement Shapes Eastpoint Future

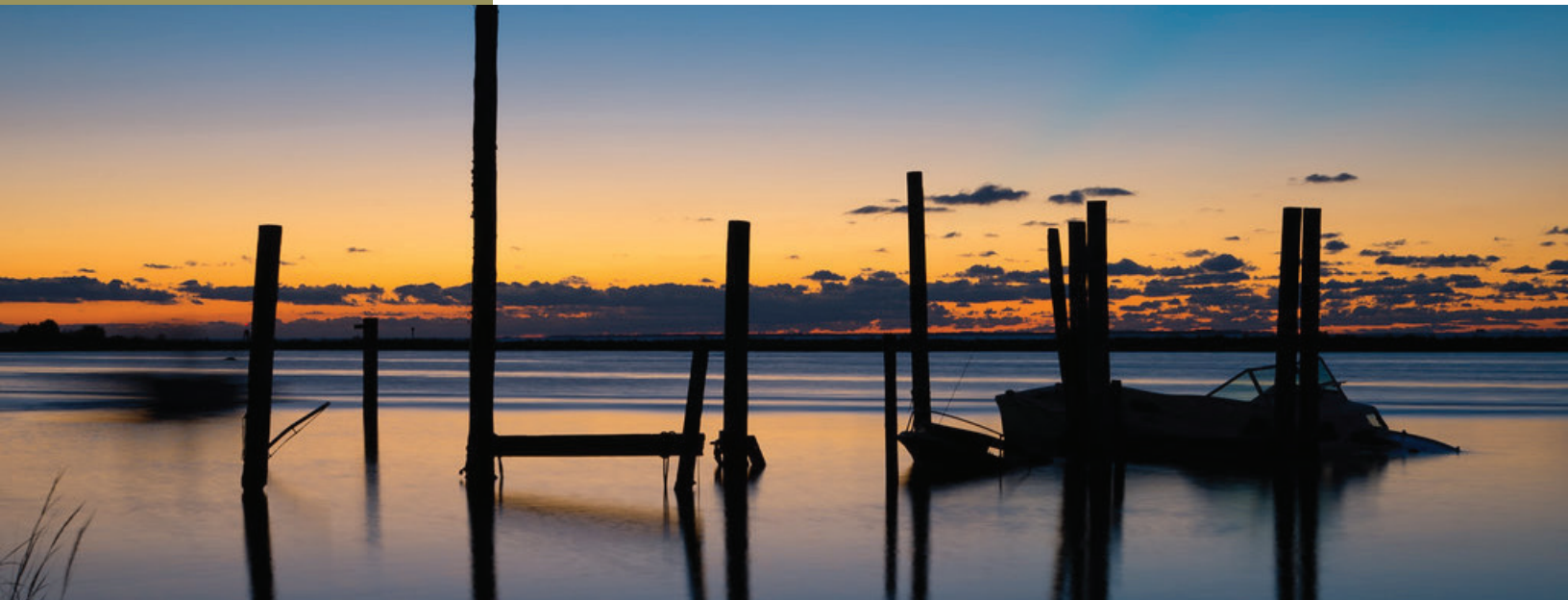
Editor's Note: The SGI Civic Club newsletter typically focuses on island issues. We consider the Renaissance of Eastpoint to be such a significant event for the SGI and our own future that we want to share the story of how their citizen leadership is changing the look of our gateway to the island.

Of the changes and growth affecting Franklin County during this era, nothing else is quite like the Renaissance gathering strength in the community of Eastpoint. Led by the recently organized Eastpoint Civic Association, ECA, some of the region's oldest families and their friends are coming together to design and control the future of the waterfront community. "People ask us why we are adding all this volunteer work to our lives," says ECA spokesperson Rex Pennycuff, whose family owns Fisherman's Choice. "I tell them it's for selfish reasons. We all love Eastpoint."

When the Eastpoint businesspeople and residents began their discussions, they knew they wanted professional help to engage the community and develop a Strategic Plan for desirable economic development. Their first step was to seek technical assistance from the Apalachicola Regional Planning Council (ARPC) to create a twenty-to-thirty-year roadmap of guidance for grants, partnerships, and smart growth that might also preserve Eastpoint's "nice, quaint town" atmosphere. With Commissioner Ricky Jones serving on the ARPC board, the Eastpoint Civic Association was able to make the connection quickly and begin a series of community "listening" workshops that would last for approximately a year. The final ARPC Report is anticipated to be released within the coming weeks.

The Association's members are most afraid of the potential loss of public vistas of the Sound and Bay if entrepreneurs manage to develop the slivers of land south of Hwy 98. A common signatory vision is a waterfront boardwalk that would parallel the 98 Business Corridor running between

Continued on next page



Save the Date



**SGL Civic Club 2021
Golf Tournament
& Charity Fundraiser**

October 15, 2021



**Golf Merchandise
is still available.**

(It's a great way to support our mission.)

Visit <http://sgcivicclub.com/pro-shop.html>



Barbers Seafood to the east and Eastpoint Public Boat Ramp to the west. The group hopes to help County Commissioners receive a USDA grant that would focus on maintaining a waterfront walkway for pedestrians and those wishing simply to enjoy the view. Some longtime residents recall the days when pleasure boats were able to pull up to waterfront restaurants before the channel become impassable.

A third grant under development would add palm trees and other landscaping along Hwy 98. A similar grant resulted from a partnership between SGI Civic Club and County Commission for landscaping along the SR 300 bridge causeway. The state Department of Transportation provides these funds annually to eligible grantees.

The Association has identified its assets and challenges, with a focused approach on each. Heavily damaged and abandoned structures have long impaired a positive visual image of Eastpoint and waterfront Hwy 98. ECA is petitioning the County Commission, as well as seeking private financial contributions, to ease the burden of tipping fees required by the county landfill when the buildings' owners agree to bear the cost of demolition of the unsightly and unsafe structures. Clean up of the vacant land is an ongoing issue, but the association is mapping ownership of each property to coordinate with private owners.

Already ECA has made progress as it takes advantage of opportunities as they arise. In yet another partnership, this one among Duke Energy, county government, and ECA, the result has been the installation of street lighting along Hwy 98. The Sheriff, school district, county government and Duke Energy are also ECA partners hoping to add street lighting to interior streets, particularly where children await a school bus. ECA completed construction of an open-air pavilion within the community's cemetery, using volunteers, and anticipates the installation of benches there soon.

ECA not only is focused on desirable economic development but is lending support to other worthwhile community activities that improve the quality of life in Eastpoint and serve to bring the community together, such as the annual Christmas Parade and the family center known as Hope Park.

4th of July SGI Parade Route

1. Harry A's
2. Piggly Wiggly
3. The Beach Pit
4. Mango Mikes
5. The Cut
6. BJ's Pizza
7. Blue Parrot
8. Weber's Little Donut Shop
9. Seaside Cotton
10. SGI Visitor's Center
11. Spark's & Son's Grocery
12. St. George Cantina
13. Island Adventures
14. Aunt Ebby's Ice Cream
15. Subway
16. Sometimes It's Hotter
17. Island Fit/Art of Glass
18. Island Dog Outdoors
19. Island Dog Beach Shop
20. Paddy's Raw Bar
21. Journey's



Update On SGI Incorporation

Submitted by Shannon Bothwell. The Civic Club is including this article as a courtesy. Its publication in this newsletter should not be considered an endorsement of incorporation by the SGI Civic Club or its board.

The project of potentially incorporating SGI is still rolling forward. The zoom-based community meetings held February 10, March 10, and March 31 were attended by hundreds of stakeholders who had the opportunity to express their views on the future direction of the island and ask questions about what incorporation would mean for us. The initial meeting demonstrated that there was broad community support for maintaining our low density, protecting environmental resources, preserving our laid-back way of life, and supporting our locally-owned businesses. At the same time, there was a common desire to address unmet infrastructure needs like better drainage and road repairs. The meetings also included detailed discussions of the potential town government structure, the breakdown of responsibilities between the town and county, and a sample town budget. Meeting participants were polled on their attitudes toward incorporation, and our registered voters at the meetings showed strong support for the idea (58% in favor, 23% against, 20% undecided). Check out the website www.TownofSGI.com for copies of the meeting materials, including detailed after-action reports prepared by the moderators from the FSU Department of Regional and Urban Planning.

The next step toward incorporation is to have an incorporation bill passed by the Florida Legislature. This bill must be introduced by our local representative, Jason Shoaf. As a prerequisite to filing the bill, Representative Shoaf is requiring that we hold a formal but non-binding opinion poll ("straw poll") of our voters on the issue. The straw poll can only be held in conjunction with a normal election such as a primary or general election, so the earliest the straw poll can occur is in 2022. There is no cost to holding this straw poll since it is done at the same time as a regularly scheduled election, but it must be initiated by the Board of County Commissioners. During the second half of 2021, the members of the incorporation working group will be meeting with the county commissioners to update them on the incorporation effort and obtain their support for placing the straw poll question on the ballot in the 2022 primary election.

Assuming the results of the straw poll are positive, the timeline for the incorporation process would be:

- August 2022 — straw poll on incorporation
- March-April 2023 — Legislature in session; hopefully our incorporation bill passes
- Mid-2023 — actual voter referendum on incorporation
- Fall 2023 — special election to elect town council
- January 1, 2024 — town begins its existence
- November 2024 — town receives its first tax revenue

To receive updates on the process, share your email in the contact form at the website www.TownofSGI.com.



Mason Bean

The Island and Civic Club Need You!

One of the greatest challenges facing voluntary civic organizations is sustainability. As of this writing, the SGI Civic Club has 23 first time members in 2021. That's the good news! The other side of the coin is that we have a only 28% renewal rate from old members. We are pretty sure that most of us have just forgotten to send in dues, since we have fallen out of the monthly habit of attending Civic Club. But the island needs to involvement of everyone to protect what we love and to speak with a strong voice for our community. See comments below from Past President and Volunteer Leader Mason Bean. Your dues go to charitable organizations, island beautification projects, membership activities, and SGI advancement projects. Please register today!

<http://sgicivicclub.com/membership.html>

Mason Bean



Sunset on the Apalachicola Bay. Photo by Michael Yelvington.

Some folks recently asked why should they join the SGI Civic Club?

Response from a Civic Club Past President – Mason Bean

- The club started over 40 years ago with the sole intention of supporting a Fire Dept. Today our Volunteer Fire Dept. and 1st Responders have 20 members, Two Fire Stations, 95' Ladder Truck, 3 Pumpers, 1 quick attack truck and 2 Rescue vehicles. Our VFD has an ISO Rating of 4, which is almost unheard of with volunteers. The Civic Club plays an important role in this effort with money and leadership.
- The SGICC spreads island goodwill by supporting many charities around the county with your regular Dues, your Donations earning golf shirts and caps, special activities like the Annual Charity Golf Tournament, and our ever-popular Winter Bingo. Groups like Fire Dept., local Food Pantries, "Bring Me a Book" distribution to local children at county events, Friends of the Library, Lighthouse Association, College Scholarships for deserving Franklin seniors, and Prison Ministries are just some of the local entities to benefit from your participation.
- Monthly Meetings start with social time to visit with neighbors and meet new islanders.
- The meals are always delicious, with the Civic Club providing the main entrée and the side dishes and desserts coming from each of you.
- Our short meetings (ending around 8 pm) provide Informative local topics for discussion, introduce you to local and state elected officials, list opportunities to volunteer in coming weeks, and announce upcoming events that provide more chances for fellowship with islanders and others.

But most importantly the Civic Club is recognized as the Island's political voice. We have a strong organized membership that is vital in keeping our island lifestyle protected. So as we get new neighbors, please invite them to join. Our dinners/General Meetings are always the 3rd Thursday of each month. You will be glad you did.



Photo by Michael Yelvington



Join 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 this form and your check to: St. George Civic Club, PO Box 451, Eastpoint, FL 32328

NAME #1 _____

CHECK ONE: NEW MEMBERSHIP RENEWING MEMBERSHIP

EMAIL _____

NAME #2 _____

CHECK ONE: NEW MEMBERSHIP RENEWING MEMBERSHIP

EMAIL _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

CITY: _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

CHECK TOTAL (Not tax deductible): \$20.00 \$40.00

**SGI CIVIC CLUB
2021 BOARD MEMBERS**

President: Jim Morris
jim.morr98@yahoo.com

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Treasurer: Phyllis Lewis
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At-Large: Carol McCormick
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At-Large: Bernie Boehnlein
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At-Large: Erin Griffith
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2021 COMMITTEES

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Winter Bingo: Ben Mathewson
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Gov't Relations: Mike and Pat O'Connell
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St. George Island
Civic Club