

# Accreting a plan

**A**t a very well attended meeting held at Church of the Holy Cross Episcopal on Sullivan's Island, the Sullivan's Island Town Council presented a set of "guiding principles" for management of the 90+ acres of accreted land on the island's beachfront. The principles were developed by Council members Pat O'Neil, Jerry Kaynard and Madeleine McGee. No more than three Council members were permitted to sit together on the proposal as more would have been considered an official public meeting. The Council unanimously voted to accept the principles, but not before expressing some stipulations and not before public comment on the issue.

For nearly an hour, residents took turns speaking on the matter. Front beach property owners continued to defend their right to ocean breezes and views as well as property values, pointing out the nuisance of rats, snakes, foxes and other wildlife that come with the thick brush which borders their yards. Some went so far as to say that the opposition to the front beach property owners' wishes have "the most selfish public opinion I have ever seen". That same resident went on to say that if you want trees, there are thousands of them at the Francis Marion National Forest and that the front beach property owners carry the

**Accreted land from front page**

tax burden for the rest of the island. Many of those with similar concerns suggested the "Hood/Bluestein" plan, named for front beach residents Bobby Hood and Nicky Bluestein, who say front beach property owners should be allowed to do "demonstration projects" to the accreted land in front of their homes according to their own will and money. These projects heavily favor "Option 4", which would allow the building of dunes and removal of tracts of trees in the process.

Those in favor of conservation took the public comment hour as an opportunity to explain

how a mature maritime forest would benefit the island. They continued to stress the value of nature and natural evolution, as well as the protection that a forest would provide for the island. They also stated that the accreted land belongs to everyone, not just front beach property owners. The Sullivan's Islanders, an ecologically minded group that has been viewed as the "opposition" to the front beach owners group, stated that they want a combination approach which stresses the importance of a natural forest, adding that their design is consistent with policies held by the State's Department of Natural Resources and the

United States Department of the Interior.

To kick off the public comments, Mayor Carl Smith took a moment to address the crowd. Smith prefaced his statement with a small story that began when he and his wife moved to Sullivan's Island and bought a home. At that time, he explained, they were able to see the harbor from their porch. They could even see the Morris Island lighthouse. Since then, however, homes were built and now they no longer have the view they once had.

"Somehow, we're still making it and enjoying our house," he said. He went on to say that the accretion of all that land on the front beach that has resulted in a forest in front of what used to be ocean front homes should be viewed as a privilege and not a right.

Lawyers and professors for both parties presented reasons why property values are important and why conservation is important. When the dust settled, the Council presented a set of agreed upon principles to guide the hired consultants in the development of a plan. Those principles included:

- Accreted land is a resource for everyone.
- Town Council alone has the right and duty to manage the property.
- The Town has a responsibility

to be good stewards and good neighbors to property owners.

- The area is diverse and should be divided into zones. Different zones require different strategies.
- A transitional band needs to be developed between front beach properties and the accreted land.
- Large areas of Wax Myrtles could be cleared into fields.

The City Council also presented directions and requirements which the consultants will need to follow and include in drafting the final plan for the accreted land. The Council unanimously voted to accept the principles and directions for the consultants. However, Council member Mike Perkis stated that his affirmative vote only came because the Council would review the document again at their December 15 meeting, and it needed to include more statements on the inherent, natural importance of a maritime forest. Council member McGee also stated that she wanted to include edits before a final draft of their principles and direction is given to the consultants.

*The Council is expected to hold their regular meeting at Town Hall on December 15 at 6pm, and to further discuss the guiding document for the accreted land.*