

Change is Inevitable; Progress is Optional

As you read this, the City election results are being reported elsewhere in this paper. The heralded era of Frank Pate will be evolving into the next era for Port St. Joe. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mayor Pate for his service to so many for so long.

Our leadership is changing, but the needs of our people are the same as before. It remains to be seen as we welcome our newest leaders as to whether all will rise to the level of statesmen, to affirmingly direct the priorities of public affairs. For your interest, following are definitions of “statesman” and “politician.” Statesman: “Great wisdom and ability in directing public affairs.” Politician: “Seeker or holder of public office more concerned about winning favor or retaining power than maintaining principle.”

We have every confidence that statesmen/stateswomen will be borne of this election process.

With the new leadership coming on board, this seems an opportune time to share our collective vision. The PSJRA is dedicated to the principle of collaborative redevelopment of the communities within its boundaries, integrated to balance priorities and providing collaborative and cooperative strength to the other. Each distinct community—North Port St. Joe, Downtown, Waterfronts and the JOE Company Town Center—has different priorities: affordable housing, business customers, preservation and ecotourism, and value-creation. The PSJRA supports and affirms the priorities of each, while balancing, integrating and creating consensus on the mutual effects of individual priorities to engineer a successful outcome for all.

Waterfronts has established a momentum in their efforts and has been essential to the larger concerns and discussions of the others. Their master plan has been adopted, and their organization has taken many broad steps toward future implementations. They have worked with the City, PSJRA and JOE to connect Frank Pate Park to the Marina, thus keeping the Waterfront area within the redevelopment area accessible to the public.

JOE, likewise, has begun improvements on the Marina that will beautify the area and accentuate the Marina as a destination for boaters, fisherman and tourists. JOE has also established affordable housing at Bridgeport and is looking to increase land available for affordable housing in that same area. Additionally, JOE has committed to connecting communities directly through their property—no small offering given the necessity, by their own account, for the health and prosperity of the City as a whole.

North Port St. Joe is poised for progress through their community-activated advisory group now combined and working shoulder-to-shoulder with the entire PSJRA active community. Once the revised strategic redevelopment plan is adopted by the City, they may accelerate progress in their concerns with the assistance of WIM Associates and the PSJRA.

Downtown is poised to launch a facade-improvement program, streetscape-improvements program, increase parking, and a regional stormwater plan—again once the revised redevelopment plan is approved by the City.

Thus, our leadership may be changing but the priorities and the needs of the people within the PSJRA remain the same. The personalities and styles will change, but the fundamental principles and priorities will remain. The PSJRA is dedicated to bridging the change from the progress of the past to the progress of the future.

The PSJRA board will be reviewing and discussing the year-long effort culminating in this version of the revised strategic redevelopment plan at the firestation at 5 PM on Thursday, May 10th. We will also be discussing the Williams Avenue engineering survey/improvements and results of the recent Reid/Williams survey. Please attend.

And again, welcome to the newly elected leadership.