

Wm. Weston J. Newton, Chairman  
March 17, 2009  
Buckwalter Community Center Groundbreaking

Welcome! Thank you for joining us as we celebrate a new Bluffton Center which will be standing on this site about one year from now. I am pleased to introduce the very right reverend D. Charles E. Owens, III, Rector of Bluffton's historic Church o the Cross. Father Owens, will you lead in the blessing of this site?

Thank you, Father Owens.

This exciting project will serve many families and individuals in the Greater Bluffton Area. It is the result of a win-win partnership between Beaufort County and the Town of Bluffton. The Town has generously provided the property and the County is constructing the facilities and will operate them under the County Parks and Leisure Services Division.

When the entire master plan is completed this site will be transformed in the 100-acre Buckwalter Regional County Park. Come of the major amenities in the plan include 4 baseball fields, 4 additional soccer fields, a sports pavilion, a children's playground, a batting cage, a 25 meter lap pool, a skating park and a tennis center with several courts.

Phase 1 of this project was completed during the summer of 2006. This encompassed roads, parking, two soccer fields, restrooms, and a storage facility.

Today, we celebrate the beginning of construction of phase 2 – the new Buckwalter Community Center – which will contain 2 multi-purpose gymnasiums with courts for basketball, volleyball, gymnastics, special events, exhibitions and other worthwhile community activities.

The gyms have been designed with a retractable wall between them capable of creating one open large space for various uses. There will also be men's and women's restrooms, locker rooms with showers, space for equipment storage, a concession/vending area, administrative offices and a conference room.

The center was designed to be expandable in the future – up to 35,000 square feet. Drawings and specifications were completed by Clancy Wells Architects from Charleston, South Carolina. Mashburn Construction – as of Charleston – was awarded the construction contract in the amount of \$3,871,706. The new center should be finished in about 1 year.

As Bluffton continues to grow with many new families who seek a sense of community and shared values, Beaufort County and the Town are in a wonderful position. Together, we can enable our ever-evolving home town by providing opportunities for citizens to create new bonds and friendships. Through these facilities and the teamwork and recreation fostered by PALS we will all strengthen the sense of place and the identity of our community.

Many of our southern Beaufort County residents are new residents. They were not born here, but they have chosen to be here. Through community projects like this, our history will become their history, our culture , their culture and, in turn they will enrich us as well.

Through projects like the Buckwalter Community Center and the completed Regional Park, he people of Bluffton and southern Beaufort County will be offered many opportunities for shared experiences. Strangers will become neighbors. Neighbors will become friends. For our children, this can mean the building of life-long attachments. This is what community is about. This facility will foster and strengthen our sense of kinship here in our “home town” of Bluffton, Greater Bluffton, Okatie, Beaufort County, whatever you call it – its home.

Now, it is my greatest pleasure to introduce Bluffton Mayor Lisa Sulka.

(Mayor Sulka)

Thank you Mayor Sulka. At this time I would like to ask Beaufort County PALS Advisory Board Chairman Arthur Middleton to say a few words

(Mr. Middleton)

Now, Mayor Sulka, Arthur Middleton, Rob McFee, Bob Klink, David Hughes, Steve Hatton, Mark Clancy, let’s put on our hard hats, pick up our shovels and officially break ground on this important community project.