

Wm. Weston J. Newton, Chairman
September 12, 2007
Buckwalter Park Phase I – Ribbon Cutting

On behalf of Beaufort County Council, I welcome each of you and thank you for showing up this morning to help us formally acknowledge this achievement, which represents a fruitful partnership between the Town of Bluffton and Beaufort County.

Buckwalter Park was designed to meet the demands of growth in the Bluffton area. This first phase of a 100-plus-acre recreational complex represents a \$4.3 million commitment to the well being of our citizens.

This day would not have arrived without an amiable and successful joint effort by the county and the town. As a result of this mutual cooperation, 550 local children now play soccer here. I am delighted to say that my son, William, is among them. These five full size soccer fields support 55 soccer teams and ten football teams.

Land for this park was deeded to the town in 2001 by S.P. Forests, LLC - which is affiliated with the International Paper Company. It included 103.3 acres of high ground and 39.2 acres of wetlands. The town was also given \$50,000 for design of the park and \$250,000 for its construction.

The town and the county then entered into an agreement that the County would construct, operate, and maintain the Park. In 2005 Beaufort County Council earmarked \$1.55 million in bond monies for this project. Then, council added an additional \$2.6 million in impact fees. This year, council approved \$1.8 in CIP funds for a total of \$4.3 million so far. Of that \$4.3 million, more than half came from impact fees. In the future additional phases of this recreational complex will be funded mostly through impact fees.

Eventually, these 100 acres will include a baseball complex, thirteen outdoor tennis courts and pro shop, a 21,500 sq. ft. recreation center with two large, multi-purpose gymnasiums and locker rooms with showers. The center is being built for expansion with future phases and will one day have ball courts, exercise classes, activity areas for youth and seniors and an aquatics complex with a 50-meter pool.

Again, without the partnership of our friends and neighbors from town, this would not be happening. I would also like to extend special appreciation and gratitude to our PALS board and our hardworking staff under the leadership of County Administrator Gary Kubic. Without their hard work, vision and dedication we wouldn't be here today.

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce Bluffton Town Councilman Charlie Wetmore and Al Stern, Vice Chairman of the PALS Board.

Again, thank you for attending today and supporting Beaufort County PALS and Buckwalter Park. Now, we will join together to cut the ribbon.