

A Response to Mr. Yarbrough

In his column today, Dick Yarbrough says that we are not the Sea Island Company of the past. This is correct. We are the Sea Island Company of the present. When we purchased the Sea Island Company out of bankruptcy in 2010, we committed to turning around a business that had created a wonderful destination for over eight decades, but, like many other companies, had fallen on hard times. We invested our own capital toward the goals of re-energizing and growing the business, maintaining and growing a valuable employee base (over 1,800 strong at present), making whole the vendors who had not yet been paid, and honoring the deposits made by our club members. Since our acquisition of the company, we have invested over \$40 million in additional capital to facilitate its growth, which is evidence of our long term vision for Sea Island.

We also committed to keeping the business viable and competitive in a difficult market while protecting one of its priceless assets: the natural ecosystem that makes this place so special.

While our owners may not reside in Georgia, we remain committed to continuing the Sea Island tradition of responsible land stewardship and active community involvement. We were responsible for the specific commitment of \$2 million toward the purchase and preservation of Cannon's Point, and we have been, and continue to be, the largest corporate benefactor to the St. Simons Land Trust.

Sea Island is a major contributor both financially and through in-kind donations to dozens of local and regional charitable and non-profit organizations. Many members of our team, including myself, serve on the boards of these local and regional organizations. Our team members pride themselves on their active participation and volunteerism with many organizations committed to making our community a better place to live and work.

If Mr. Yarbrough had called me before he wrote his column, I would have invited him to walk the 7.3-acre property next to the Cloister Ocean Residences where we plan to develop eight lots. He would have seen for himself that the building footprint, which only encompasses 3.5 acres, is not on a "spit." It's one mile from the end of Sea Island. And of course it's not underwater during high tide as he mistakenly suggests. It is heavily vegetated with elevations as high as 20 feet. The construction of eight homes, in compliance with state, federal and local laws, will not cause the property to erode.

I would still like to clarify a few points Mr. Yarbrough made in his column with respect to private property and what he calls "fully engaging the court of public opinion."

Quoting Woody Guthrie, he notes that "this land is your land, this land is my land." Is Mr. Yarbrough suggesting that we redefine the concept of private property ownership? If so, other Georgians who have purchased homes and land may disagree. Does this mean that Mr. Yarbrough's home on East Beach is also "my land"?

He quotes former Lt. Gov. Pierre Howard who calls for the "court of public opinion" to be "fully engaged in the deliberations." In fact, the public was engaged when we went before the Island Planning Commission to obtain plat approval, which was done in full compliance with the law.

A few other points I would have conveyed to Mr. Yarbrough if he had called before forming his opinion:

- Despite the zoning approval in 2003 that would allow higher density hotel rooms or condominiums, we have chosen to develop only eight residential lots on the Cloister Reserve.
- Glynn County will have no responsibility for any storm damage that may occur at the Cloister Reserve.
- The homes will not be eligible for federally subsidized flood insurance, but the homeowners will be able to purchase insurance, at their own expense.
- The Cloister Reserve will be built just next to the existing Cloister Ocean Residences and has the same topography and geology.
- The Cloister Reserve homes will not threaten the beach habitat of turtles, birds and other species.
- Our resort and member programming at Sea Island is a key component of our destination and is intended to facilitate the enjoyment of, and education about, the wonderful natural resources that surround us.

I admire the work done by Messrs. Yarbrough and Howard to earn the accolades they have received. I just wonder why anyone would risk their credibility without first checking their facts. What does the Yarbrough Rule say about admitting mistakes?

Perhaps it's best to first ask us about our intent and plans rather than simply making an assumption. This would avoid a lot of confusion, misunderstanding and inaccuracies.

Thank you,



Scott Steilen
President, Sea Island



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