First development in 25 years here at last

Developer JoAnn Gilbertson, CCBA’s secretary, received a building permit from the City’s Development Services Department on March 3 and four days later started construction on “Beachcomber Cottages,” five resort-inspired townhomes that mark the first development on Corpus Christi Beach in 25 years. Until this project, the most recent developments to break ground in this area were The Beach Place condos and The Harbors housing development, both in 1984.

“People in the neighborhood are excited,” Gilbertson said. “They are coming up to me saying that they have seen so many signs go up promising development and that mine is the first one to actually come through. These are people who are watching it from their balcony window. It’s exciting for me, of course, but it’s also exciting for the neighborhood. I feel like I have a lot of support,” she said.

The five townhomes being built on the corner of Gulfbreeze Boulevard and Reef Avenue will be painted “beachy tropical colors” such as pink, green, purple, yellow and blue, she said.

Gilbertson’s contractor, T&T Construction, has been moving quickly, starting with the first two 960-square-foot cottages. By March 15, the pilings, foundation beams and framing for the roof and walls on the first unit were up. They should be complete by late May. After that, Gilbertson plans to build three more cottages on the 13,000-square-foot lot. The cottages start at $139,900. The

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Social Hour Menu
Food by Sami Cameron
($5/person donation)

• Smokey Pork Tenderloin for sandwiches
• Chimichurri Sauce
• Mustard Sauce
• Boiled Texas Shrimp
• Red Sauce
• Olive Garden Salad
• Creamy Potato Salad
• Disappearing Spinach Dip/veggies
• Krispy Kreme Bread Pudding with Butter
• Rum Sauce
• Cookies by Herb The Cookie Man
• Wine will be served

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Continued on page 2
Cottages ...  
Continued from page 1

development will include a pool and BBQ area, covered parking and an enclosed storage area on ground level. The upstairs living area will include Travertine tile floors, French doors, balconies, vaulted lofts and energy efficient metal roofing. They will be built on stilts and pre-wired for solar panels.

When interviewed by the North Beach News in September 2008 after applying through the City’s Development Services Department for her permit, Gilbertson said that she hopes her project will be “the beginning of a beautiful beach-area transformation.” The permitting process took longer than she expected, about five months, which is longer than the permitting process took in other places she has developed including Amarillo, Texas, and Fargo, North Dakota.

As part of the permitting process for her development, she paid almost $5,000 in fees to Parks & Recreation which will go to improving park facilities within one and half miles of her development. She has been active in CCBA’s recent efforts to revitalize the north end of the beach, which has included adding a new playground and requesting that the park’s name be changed to Dolphin Park. Gilbertson has asked the City to use some of the money she paid in development fees to improve the public bathhouse at the north end.

Gilbertson also owns a vacation condo rental business called Condos on the Beach At A Hotel Price, corpuschristi-hotel.com, renting condos at Villa del Sol on Corpus Christi Beach. She and her husband Robin moved to Corpus Christi in 2006 from Fargo, North Dakota, after vacationing here the year before. “We thought, ‘Why not live where you vacation?’” she explained. So they sold their home and moved to Corpus. For more information, call 361-834-1481.
New north end playground ready for Spring Break

City Parks & Recreation crews worked during February and March installing three pieces of playground equipment, a bench and an ADA-compliant sidewalk at the north end of North Beach, pushing to finish in time for Spring Break crowds to enjoy the new park. The metal swing set, climber and slide are surrounded by a plastic retaining wall that contains 12-inches of mulch to provide a safe zone around the equipment.

Nueces County, under the guidance of then-Commissioner Peggy Bañales, donated all the new equipment and supplies, which cost about $15,000.

Corpus Christi Parks & Recreation Department donated the land and crews to install the sidewalk and playground, which took several days to complete. Parks & Rec will also maintain the facility, which is located near the public pavilion and bathhouse on the north end.

Corpus Christi Beach Association donated $2,500 to the playground project, helping to fund concrete expenses. The group also formally requested that the name of the park be changed from “North Facility” to “Dolphin Park.”

The February issue of North Beach News incorrectly reported that the “Dolphin Park” name change was official. However, it is still going through the name change process: After it was approved by the Park & Recreation Advisory Committee on February 11, the city must erect signs at the site notifying the public of the pending name change. After a 60-90 day waiting period, the name change request then moves to City Council for final approval or disapproval.

The idea behind the “Dolphin Park” name change (which came from JoAnn Gilbertson) is to give the area a fun-sounding name that would help draw more people to the area. Pods of Bottlenose Dolphins can often be seen from the park, swimming in the bay. To build on the theme, CCBA has discussed raising funds to buy several concrete dolphin sculptures that double as playground items for kids to crawl on and as benches for adults to rest on. The sculptures would be placed near the playground “in formation,” as if swimming in a pod.
Calendar of Events

March 19 - Karl Swafford's Corpus Christi.


April 18 - Earth Day/Bay Day. Exhibits, games, entertainment, food, activities. McCaughan Park and McGee Beach (CC Bayfront), 10am-5pm. Info: www.baysfoundation.org

April 23-26 - Texas International Boat Show, CC Marina, People’s Street T-Head. Over 400 boats in the water, ready to demo, plus 250 more onshore along with boating and fishing gear. Also on display will be luxury motor homes, trucks, exotic cars, airplanes, custom bikes. Wakeboard competition, fashion shows, live music, US coastguard search and rescue demos. Info: www.corpuschristimarina.com, 361-826-3980


April 25 - 23rd Annual Adopt-A-Beach cleanup. Statewide event held twice a year. Participants gather debris from area beaches. Snacks are provided after the event held at various site locations in the Coastal Bend. North Beach event starts at the Texas State Aquarium. Info: www.texasadoptabeach.org, Krystal Mead, 361-881-1321

GREAT BLUE HERON
The Great Blue Heron is a common sight on North Beach, standing on the north jetty, fishing on the beach or perched on wooden posts. This shorebird, the largest and heaviest of the herons, measures four feet tall with a six-foot wingspan. It has a blue-gray back, black patches on its sides and a gray and white-striped belly. The cheeks, throat and top of the head are white. It has a black stripe over its eye and a long, black feather decorating the back of its head. Its bill is yellow and its legs are greenish-brown. It is generally solitary and nocturnal, hunting fish and other animals while wading slowly in quiet waters. Its call is like a loud, rusty squawk. Bird watchers sometimes witness “heron wars” when one heron loudly chases off another that has encroached on its territory. Great Blue Herons made a miraculous comeback from near extinction when the pesticide DDT (now illegal in the U.S.) caused the shells of their eggs to be soft so that the weight of the parent birds crushed them in the nest. This month, these birds can be seen nesting in platforms built on Causeway Island west of Hwy 181.
With elections coming, politicians court CCBA members

On February 19, all three mayoral candidates (Joe Adame, Henry Garrett and Douglas Schaffer) attended the CCBA meeting and were each given a few minutes to introduce themselves and to answer questions.

Since the CCBA has publicly stated its opposition to the proposed Las Brisas pet-coke plant, CCBA member Carrie Robertson asked candidate Adame to describe his stance on the plant. He responded that City Council and the Mayor have made it clear that they support the plant and that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) will be in charge of the permitting process for the plant. Robertson was disappointed, she said, "because I am hoping to find a candidate who will stand up and recognize the valid concern that thousands of Coastal Bend residents have about the air and water pollution Las Brisas will bring if it is built, but I have yet to find any politician that will touch the issue, due to its controversial nature. I see it as the number-one issue."

In a 7-0 vote in September, the City Council passed a resolution in support of the power plant, with Councilmen John Marez and Larry Elizondo absent. In February, Council member Mike McCutchon asked that the council be presented with more information about the complex issue, but Mayor Henry Garrett would not allow it to be placed on the agenda, which meant it would take five Council members to override him.

City Council member for Region 2 (including North Beach), John Marez, has been in the news lately as the last-minute swing vote on the controversial decision by City Council to not revisit the Las Brisas issue. Marez initially said he would support revisiting the issue but then changed his mind and was one of five of the nine Council members to vote down revisiting the issue. He said that the Council doesn’t have authority over whether the petroleum coke-fueled power plant comes in, so he didn’t see the need to get more information. Local groups opposing the pet-coke plant counter that there are steps City Council could take to, at least symbolically, show opposition to or concerns about the plant, which even its own developers say will substantially increase levels of pollution in Corpus Christi and surrounding towns.

Marez attended the February 19 CCBA meeting, asking members to support him in the polls in April. His opponent is William Henneberger, a writer for a local publication.

At the upcoming March 19 meeting, several City Council candidates running for "At-Large" seats will be the featured speakers. Those that have confirmed by press time included Brent Chesney, Melody Cooper, David Loeb, Nelda Martinez and Mark Scott. The only newcomer to the group is Loeb, as the others are either incumbent (Cooper and Martinez) or former Council members (Chesney and Scott).

At-large seats are elected by plurality vote, meaning that the top three candidates with the most votes will be elected without a runoff as long as they receive 12 percent of votes.

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Advertising space now available
Business card sized ads in the North Beach News cost $25 per issue. Call 361-883-7245 for info.
Sami Cameron is an integral part of CCBA and keeps attendance numbers high at our monthly meetings through her delicious meals prepared with skill and her own special flare. Sami is not only important to CCBA but is also a volunteer for many other local organizations. She is one of CCBA’s friendliest and most well-known faces.

Dr. Deidre Williams spoke to CCBA on February 19.

Geologist speaks to CCBA

Dr. Deidre Williams of TAMU-CC’s Division of Nearshore Research spoke to the CCBA on February 19 about North Beach from a geologist’s perspective. Her talk, entitled “Geology, Challenges and Beach Nourishment,” included a PowerPoint presentation, maps and photos. She explained that North Beach is basically a sand spit that functions as a safety valve during storms, dissipating excess water over the low flats. Due to dams upstream, sand has become a finite resource, meaning North Beach will always need periodic renourishments. The last renourishment was done in 1978, and the north jetty was built in 1990. She said that since vegetation growing in the sand stabilizes the beach, the challenge will be to remove standing water without losing the vegetation.

Floating yacht center leaves the Rincon, towed to CC Marina

The Yachting Center of Corpus Christi, a floating building that was being built in the Rincon Canal on North Beach this winter, left its berth and was towed by a tugboat past The Harbors development and under the Portland Causeway, then across Corpus Christi Bay to its final destination, the Corpus Christi Marina. The turquoise, red and white building will reside on the People’s Street T-Head next door to Landry’s Seafood Restaurant.


Member of the Month

Sami Cameron is an integral part of CCBA and keeps attendance numbers high at our monthly meetings through her delicious meals prepared with skill and her own special flare. Sami is not only important to CCBA but is also a volunteer for many other local organizations. She is one of CCBA’s friendliest and most well-known faces.
BoldFuture Summit draws leaders, citizens with vision

North Beach homeowner and CCBA newsletter editor Carrie Robertson was one about 350 Coastal Bend residents to participate in a half-day seminar on February 28 called “BoldFuture for the Coastal Bend Vision Summit.” The “think-tank” event, held at the American Bank Center, was the second phase of a four-phase project whose ultimate goal is to help the city and surrounding towns move in a positive direction.

The participants reviewed, refined and prioritized ideas that had been submitted from about 1,900 residents during a series of more than 60 community meetings held throughout 2008. That was Phase I of the BoldFuture initiative which addressed the question, “Where are we now?” On February 28, Phase II of the initiative, participants addressed the question “Where do we want to be?” Participants first broke up into focus groups to discuss two of 10 topics, such as “Sustainable Environment” and “Safe, Healthy Communities.” Other categories involved industry, economy, leadership and education.

Suggestions were wide-ranging but most envisioned a future that focuses on more high-paying jobs, sustainable energy, livability, a cleaner environment and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.

In the last part of the summit, participants placed colored dots on large posters indicating the ideas they valued the most, in effect “voting” with their dots. Organizers will total up the dots to tally up where priorities lie.

Phase III, expected to begin next fall, will aim to answer the question, “How will we get there?” Phase IV, which addresses the question “How are we doing?” will remain ongoing, with TAMU-Corpus Christi and Del Mar College committed to sponsoring an annual check-up on progress toward the vision.

A $3,500 grant from the Coastal Bend Community Foundation allowed organizers to hold the summit at no charge to the more than 350 participants, which included a free lunch.

For more info, visit www.boldfuturecoastalbend.org.

Neighborhood Beauty

North Beach News recognizes The Beach Place Condos this month for the beautiful patch of flowers and plants they have growing near their entrance.

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CCBA Member & Breakers Resident
Saltwater Pool
This historical photo from the Doc McGregor collection shows the old saltwater swimming pool on North Beach, taken August 31, 1940. In the City’s current master plan for North Beach, a water park is shown as a possible development on the 20+ acres of city-owned land on the north end of North Beach. Could another saltwater pool be built? If not, the city could build a state-of-the-art aquatic center like those in Portland and Aransas Pass with tube slides, waterfalls, run-through fountains and zero-entry pools to bring more tourism and local interest to the north end of the beach.

MEMBERSHIP FORM ~ Join or renew your membership today

CORPUS CHRISTI BEACH ASSOCIATION
Mail form and check to: CCBA, PO Box 2361, Corpus Christi, TX 78403

Name: ________________________________

Company: _______________________________________________________

Address: ________________________________________________________

City, State, Zip: ___________________________________________________

Dues are $20/year for an individual, family or a business. Dues paid now cover all of 2009.

Regular monthly meetings are held at 4:30 pm on the third Thursday of each month at The Breakers Condominium, Lanai Room, 4242 Gulfbreeze Blvd, Corpus Christi Beach

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