

FORT MORGAN NEWS

July 2017~Issue 125



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi, Folks:

The lawyers are at work on the two projects we have been following—the lawsuit by a community member against the city of Gulf Shores and our interest in an environmental/ historical bill.

Hope to see you at the July meeting.

Paul

Paul Barefield



MEMBER NOTICES

Fort Morgan Volunteer Fire DepartmentChief Glenn Stevens



The summer season kicked off with your Fire Department responding to 43 calls in May. Many were very serious and included: 5 near drownings, 2 helicopter transports, 1 structure fire, 1 electrical fire, 1 dumpster fire, 1 vehicle fire, and a number of non-emergency miscellaneous calls.

With the increased population during tourist season, the Fire Department once again faces the problem of vehicles blocking the roadways, making it difficult for emergency vehicles to navigate. We are working with the County and posting “no parking” and “fire lane” signs in critical locations. The Sheriff’s office will be towing vehicles that violate the parking restrictions.

Sheriff Ashes??? Fire & Police Dog

We recently received two vehicles that we will use for training. We plan to use our “jaws-of-life” to practice extrication of patients trapped in vehicles following a collision. Once all the extrication classes are completed, we will set the vehicles on fire to practice vehicle fire extinguishment. We plan to use our new ultra-high-pressure firefighting unit for this training. The public is welcome to join us and watch these training exercises held on the 1st and 3rd Mondays each month at 6:30 p.m. at Fire Station 1.

Our annual donation request letter was recently mailed out. Your continued support is greatly appreciated.

Fort Morgan Planning & Zoning Advisory Committee.....Chan West, Chair

The committee held a public hearing on June 21 to consider two rezoning requests:

(1) Z-17025 To rezone 6.532 acres on the south side of Highway 180, east of Pontoon Lane, Palmtree Penthouses, from RSF1 to RSF4, 98 lots into 17 lots approximately 60’ x 180’ for single family dwellings. Much of the discussion from the attendees centered around what could be built with the designation RSF4. The ardent opposition apparently failed to understand that what was being requested was 17 small single-family homes and that **nothing** else could be built without another re-zoning case. Much conjecture about 4 dwellings (on a 60x180 lot)! The RSF4 was needed because of the lot size - to meet the minimum square footage. Original zoning was RSF1 with 98 minute lots. I cannot imagine what the idea was - before we had zoning - a small RV? There is now a conservation easement worked out with Fish and Wildlife Service, a single driveway off 180. Even with the RSF1 zoning and 6.5 acres, 28 dwellings could have been built. This is the type of development we would like to see. The committee recommended approval.

(2) Z-17027 102.4 acres of Gulf Highlands, zoned R6. To modify a previously approved PRD to permit the construction of 4 20-story condominium towers with 614 units. There were several issues with the plan.

- The PRD expired some time ago.

- The area is in the Gulf Beach Overlay District where there is now a height restriction of 8 stories.
- Required documents, such as permits from Fish and Wildlife Service and a current survey, were not included.

The committee recommended denial of the request. This parcel is still included in the list for Oil Spill Restoration. Apparently this request is part of an appraisal process.

Please document, with photos, any problems you see with overflow parking along the streets in District 25 due to high-density “duplexes.” Send to Chan West at chan@goefish.com

The Fort Morgan Planning and Zoning Advisory Committee will post on our website [www.fortmorgancivic.org] re-zoning and variance request notices received from the county commission. Please refer other non-FMCA property owners who wish to stay up to date to our website. Notices of rezoning requests are posted on the property involved and mailed to adjacent landowners by the County.

FMCA also will send a special email to all members on our email list of the time and place of our Fort Morgan committee meeting and will post signs on Fort Morgan road near both fire stations. Our email notice to members is to let non-adjacent property owners who may be affected by the request express their concerns to our local committee before it submits a recommendation to the county. Any FMCA member who receives the Fort Morgan NEWS by U.S. Postal Service and wishes to receive these rezoning request notices will have to furnish us with an email address, to be sent to Chan West at: chan@goefish.com

We encourage property owners with vested interests to bring their concerns and comments to these meetings. In most cases these notices are received about 10 days before the county Planning and Zoning Commission or Board of Adjustments meeting.

Fort Morgan State Historic Site.....Mike Bailey, Senior Historian

On Saturday, July 1st we will have our annual commemoration of American Independence. This year will be a special program as the Brass Detachment of the 151st U.S. Army Band from Montgomery will be performing military music in the Fort between 10 am and Noon. There will also be special tours and artillery firing until 3PM that day. Civil War tours will also be continuing each Tuesday evening starting at 7PM during July.

Community History

The following article reminisces about the town of Gulf Shores when it was a simpler place, without the “branding” we see today (“Small Town, Big Beach”), the big box stores, or the horrific traffic. It is reprinted with permission from the Yellowhammer Daily News, Birmingham. Robert and Regina DeWitt have been homeowners in Fort Morgan for the past ten years and moved here permanently, full time, eighteen months ago. They are members of the Fort Morgan Civic Association. Robert has also covered several FMCA events for local news media including the incorporation town hall meeting.

Ghosts of Old Gulf Shores Trigger Memories

written by [Robert DeWitt](#)

June 1, 2017



Part of the little strip that was once the “main drag” in Gulf Shores. What was once the Army Navy Surplus Store is on the right. After moving to Gulf Shores, I went through several barbers before I found Wayne’s Barber Shop. It’s a bit off the beaten path. Of course, that’s not what Wayne intended. In fact, 50 years ago, he built it right on the “main drag.” Out the window in his shop’s back, you can see the little cinder block building that once served as the Gulf Shores town hall back then. The whole thing would probably fit in Mayor Robert

Craft’s palatial digs in the City Hall Annex a few blocks away.

Back in 1965, when I first came to Gulf Shores and about the time Wayne was building his shop, this was the main non-tourist commercial area. The tourists had the Rexall Drugs, Jeannie’s Food Mart and other spots down at the “T” where Alabama 59 hits the beach road.

But up where the draw bridge crossed the Intracoastal Waterway, where the ground stayed a little drier come hurricane time was Wayne's shop, the building supply store, the Army-Navy store, the flower shop, a gas station or two and Buck's Fried Chicken. For the most part, tourists drove through it on the way to the beach, a mile or so farther south, and saw it again on trips to the smattering of local restaurants and on the way out of town. Today, they won't see it at all unless they go to Tacky Jack's or decide to go from Gulf Shores to Orange Beach by Canal Road.

This little building that now houses a radio station was once the Army Navy Surplus Store.

My parents first brought me to Gulf Shores on vacation in 1965. We stayed in a little gray house that today would be rough by hunting camp standards, with no paneling or sheetrock to cover the studs and exterior walls and only a window unit AC to combat the August heat. We never stayed there again since my Mother's idea of roughing it was doing without room service.

But I couldn't have cared less. I romped on the white sand and splashed in the Gulf all day, turning from lobster red to golden brown as the week went on. At night, I slept the deep, exhausted sleep that only children sleep on a lumpy mattress under a droning window unit after a full day of unrelenting, carefree fun.

As we left town at the end of the week and crossed the small bridge over the bayou that feeds Little Lagoon, I burst into tears and declared that I would live there some day. And here I sit, in a somewhat nicer, but simple, little gray house 18 miles down the road at Fort Morgan. The place looks a bit like Gulf Shores did in 1965.

My family found accommodations more to my mother's liking at the Teh-Lou Motel. It had a tiny kitchenette, a living room, two bedrooms and a tiny dining area. It was not The Breakers at Palm Beach but even my Mother loved it.

Our days were spent all day, every day, swimming or fishing on the beach. My folks figured that was entertainment enough and didn't go in for the kind of foolishness folks went to Panama City for – go-carts and carnival rides and reptile farms and such. We usually ate out twice, once at the Friendship House, a block or so from Wayne's shop. While we waited for a table, I ran across the street to the Army-Navy store.

Unlike a lot of shopkeepers, the owner welcomed kids digging through the surplus military accouterments. There were mess kits, entrenching tools, gas masks, blankets, pouches, hats, belts and uniforms and they were immaculately ordered and arranged. I rarely left without nagging my father into buying for me some useless piece of paraphernalia.

The food at the Friendship House was wonderful but the quintessential dining experience of every trip was Meme's. We arrived there after a journey back up Highway 59 and down some winding county roads through the bucolic Baldwin County countryside that brought us to Bon Secour. The final leg of the journey was a narrow lane overarched by live oak limbs that terminated at the Bon Secour River.

Beside the water sat what looked like a small house. But inside were served incredible delicacies like fried shrimp, oysters, crab claws and fish-in-a-sack. There were usually people milling around in the yard because there was always a wait and little place else for the overflow to go. The starvation that set in during the unbearable wait for your party to be called and for the food to arrive after ordering made it that much better.

The Diner in Gulf Shores was once The Friendship House



My family hit hard times around 1970 and the family vacations ended. We went once for a weekend in 1974 and I never saw Gulf Shores again until after Hurricane Frederick took out the whole beach front, including the Teh-Lou.

My wife and I started making Fort Morgan our annual vacation spot in the late 1980s. Her family had always gone to the beach in Fort Walton Beach where her uncle lived and she knew nothing about Gulf Shores. So, my endless rambling about what had and had not been there when I was a kid meant nothing to her. I think she thought I was crazy when I kept riding up and down West Beach looking for where the Teh-Lou had once stood.

The drawbridge had been replaced by the tall bridge over the



Intracoastal even before my family quit coming there. The Friendship House was long gone, replaced by a series of restaurants, now The Diner. The old white wooden Buck's Fried Chicken building stood empty for years but now, only a sand-and-scrub lot remains in the curve next to Walmart.

The Army-Navy Surplus survived, along with its elderly owner, into the 1990s and I visited it religiously. It had changed little. In 1996 I returned with my wife carrying my unborn son to discover a radio station where it had been. And I mourned that I would never sort through the tables and shelves of stock with my son and inhale together the distinct smell of old canvas that permeated the store.

I eventually wandered around enough until I found where Meme's, which closed in the 1970s, had stood. The little building that housed a restaurant famous throughout the state was rotting and falling in.

These days, before or after haircuts, I usually drive through that little strip in Gulf Shores, just south of where the road turns 90 degrees to go from being East Second Street to Canal Road. Occasionally, I'll drive through the beach district of Gulf Shores and see a little house with louvered windows and a flat, sloping roof and remember when the whole beachfront was filled with houses like it.

It's not as if I don't love the present reality that is Gulf Shores and Fort Morgan. I wouldn't trade it for anything. But when I brush against these ghosts, for a moment, only a sweet, fleeting moment, I can feel again what it was like to be in that place that exists only in the past. And all the people and things I loved that are now gone are with me again.

About the Author: Robert DeWitt has worked for more than 30 years as a reporter and columnist in Alabama and has won numerous awards. He was a member of the staff at The Tuscaloosa News that was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for coverage of the April 27, 2011 tornado. He is a native and lifelong resident of Alabama.

Fort Morgan Hurricane Re-Entry Pass Available Only at Gulf Shores City Hall

Baldwin County has elected not to mail Fort Morgan residents decals for the 2017-2018 season. As a courtesy, re-entry decals for Fort Morgan residents may be picked up in person at Gulf Shores City Hall Revenue Division. Two decals per unit may be purchased at the cost of \$5 each, unless a hurricane or tropical storm **watch** has been issued for our area, in which case the fee doubles. Use the main entry at City Hall, stop at the security window, show your proof of residence (deed, lease or utility bill showing property street address) and your ID. It is a quick, painless process if you have the proper items. **Decals will not be issued after a hurricane or tropical storm warning has been issued.** For more detailed information about decals call (251) 968-1120 or visit the city's website at www.gulfshoresal.gov.



Turtle Tracks 2017~~~~~

~~~~~**Total = 32 Nests!!**



We were having a great start with our 2017 turtle season, then a bump in the road named Cindy. Eight nests were totally lost and several either had water wash over them or were inundated. The ones that were washed over may have some hatch success. We learned last year after storms that it is not a death sentence unless the water sits for an extended period. Good news is that we had 3 nests on Friday, 1 Saturday and 1 Sunday. This will help make up for the loss. Last year even with the storms we put over 6,000 babies to the water on Fort Morgan.

*Heartfelt thanks to all our dedicated volunteers and to Intrepid Team Leader Debbie Harbin*

#### 4 Important Reminders "For the Turtles"

- [1] **Turn Off Lights** at dark that shine on or can be seen from the beach
- [2] **Use Red Light Only** on the beach at night, not LED or white light
- [3] **Fill in Holes** dug in the sand when leaving the beach for the day
- [4] **Remove Items** from the beach when leaving each day

*Nest at Dawn Courtesy of Debbie Harbin*

## Fort Morgan Crime Report ~ June 2017.....Sgt. Nathan Lusk, BCSO

- June 23 assisted Fort Morgan VFD with a phosphorus round that washed up on shore. Navy Explosive Ordinance Disposal responded and took possession of the ordnance. The Navy EOD wanted to remind anyone who locates suspected ordnance to not handle it and contact the Navy EOD immediately.
- June 23 a package of cocaine washed up on shore and was turned over to the Sheriff's Office.
- June 20 Theft reported 900 block Boulevard Martinique (two kayaks).
  - Recovered June 21
- June 1 Theft reported 500 block Harbor Light Circle (phone, shirt and keys)

**[KEEP YOUR VEHICLES AND HOMES LOCKED AT ALL TIMES. IN SUMMER, THE MAJORITY OF THEFTS ARE FROM UNLOCKED VEHICLES, WITH OWNERS ASLEEP OR AT THE BEACH.]**

*We request that a family member notify us of any FMCA member's death and the website where an obituary and funeral arrangements can be found. With over 400 member families, we have no certain way of knowing of a member's death.*

## Baldwin County Commission Contacts

### Commissioners:

**Charles "Skip" Gruber**

[cgruber@baldwincountyal.gov](mailto:cgruber@baldwincountyal.gov)

251-943-5061

**Tucker Dorsey**

[tdorsey@baldwincountyal.gov](mailto:tdorsey@baldwincountyal.gov)

251-972-8502

**Chris Elliott**

[ctelliott@baldwincountyal.gov](mailto:ctelliott@baldwincountyal.gov)

251-990-4606

**Frank Burt, Jr.**

[fburt@baldwincountyal.gov](mailto:fburt@baldwincountyal.gov)

251-937-0395

To speak at a regular commission meeting, you must have signed up before the meeting. Check the dates, times and locations for all meetings at <http://www.baldwincountyal.gov>

## FMCA Executive Board Contacts

If you have questions, need information or would like to volunteer, please contact one of the following board members.

### Officers

|                |                |              |                                                                            |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| President      | Paul Barefield | 540-7727     | <a href="mailto:csbarefield@gmail.com">csbarefield@gmail.com</a>           |
| Vice President | Ernie Church   | 334-220-0851 | <a href="mailto:ecaces4@gmail.com">ecaces4@gmail.com</a>                   |
| Treasurer      | Chan West      | 979-4932     | <a href="mailto:chan@goefish.com">chan@goefish.com</a>                     |
| Secretary      | Carol Kittrell | 251-605-4134 | <a href="mailto:ckittrell@southalabama.edu">ckittrell@southalabama.edu</a> |

### Standing Committee Chairs

|                               |                 |          |                                                                    |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| District 25 Planning & Zoning | Chan West       | 979-4932 | <a href="mailto:chan@goefish.com">chan@goefish.com</a>             |
| Incorporation                 | Paul Barefield  | 540-7727 | <a href="mailto:csbarefield@gmail.com">csbarefield@gmail.com</a>   |
| Membership                    | Bonnie Lowry    | 540-9327 |                                                                    |
| NEWS & Website Editor         | Sonja Sanders   | 233-6208 | <a href="mailto:39sunnisands@gmail.com">39sunnisands@gmail.com</a> |
| Sunshine                      | Vickie Matranga | 543-1555 | <a href="mailto:vpowers110@gmail.com">vpowers110@gmail.com</a>     |

## FMCA 2017 MEETINGS

**FMCA Monthly Member Meetings ~ 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday, 6:30pm, Shell Banks Church:**

**July 10 ~ August 14 ~ September 11 ~ October 9 ~ November 13**

**Fort Morgan Civic Association**  
**P. O. Box 5313 ~ Gulf Shores, AL 36547**  
**[www.fortmorgancivic.org](http://www.fortmorgancivic.org)**

