



Gregory M. Thomson

Candidate by Nomination

Mobile# (843) 301-1123

Candidate Information:

Greg and Diane Thomson have been Sea Pines residents for more than twenty years. They started vacationing here with their daughters in 1978, then as an anchor point through the numerous moves with Greg's corporate career in Human Resources. Prior establishing his consulting practice, The Thomson Group, Greg served in numerous Human Resources senior leadership roles with General Electric, Public Service Electric and Gas, and Owens Corning before making Sea Pines their home.

His experience with diverse organizations in difficult situations provides insights to draw upon daily. His work is helping leaders and their companies shift from business as usual to their desired future, incorporate new technologies, change cultures, and sometimes transition to new ownership.

Greg has been recognized as an innovator, leader, problem solver, and trusted executive coach. He helped companies transform themselves from being stuck in their history, to creating a future that works for customers, employees, and shareholders.

Why I Wish to Serve the Sea Pines Community:

I believe we are all stewards of our community, enriched by leaving it better than we found it. Sea Pines is a unique and well-known jewel of the southeast coast and South Carolina. All who have invested here by owning property, a business, or call it home realize the unique qualities we enjoy. Visitors invest their precious time here, away from the daily grind, to enjoy the beauty and amenities. I believe the best is yet to come.

The context of our community has changed. From realizing the developers dream, to surviving bankruptcy, and now creating a world class community and resort committed to mutual success based on a powerful shared vision of the future. I am energized by helping create the possibility and making this vision a reality for the benefit of all.

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY

1. Where would you like to see Sea Pines in 5-10 years, and what do you propose we do to accomplish that?

Charles Fraser had a vision, courage, and the resources sufficient to declare a huge possibility. He did. He lived into that possibility. It became the future he literally lived his life into...getting up every day to take the actions necessary to move the possibility to reality. We live in that future.

As a visionary, he would share it generously with anyone interested in the conversation. Visionaries do that to keep the dream in existence for themselves and others. They enroll others in their possibility.

Our community (RPO's, Commercial, and Resort) needs to generate a new possibility or future. One that is aspirational, not an extension of the past but stands on the success of the past. We channel our founder in many forums, but are we projecting what he would do now as seen through our lenses?

The bankruptcy court created CSA to manage the issues related to operating and governing a large unique community.

The court, while exercising great wisdom and exhibiting a strong desire to preserve the community, could only hope for its continuation. The best they could generate was a platform for survival, measured by an ongoing enterprise and a functioning community. The court could not declare the dream be reinstated, reshaped, or even exist. That was and is up to the community (us and our leaders) to generate on our own.

I believe we are stuck in a survival-based context where success is just "keeping on keeping on". We survive in a community where survival looks particularly good to many. Continuity is valued over investment, growth, and thriving. Charting our own future is available to us if we work together.

The CSA components and constituencies have been described as analogous to the three-legged stool (residential, commercial, and resort) who come together to oversee the rights and obligations expressed in covenants. It is a valid and useful way to describe the structure of the CSA Board of Directors and their role...but falls short in creating a context.

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY

1. Where would you like to see Sea Pines in 5-10 years, and what do you propose we do to accomplish that? (continued)

This analogy may imply, for many among us, playing a game with zero sum outcomes. As if to say there is a shortage of resources, power, or agreement to have everyone fully satisfied. In other words, if one party is winning then the other must be losing. The context is struggle and shortage, and not enough of anything to go around to satisfy everyone. In a word survival.

It is the opposite of "Win-Win" where the context is compromise for the mutual benefit of the interested parties and long-term success. The notion, "if someone else is winning, I must be losing" is endemic in survival-based situations. Yet, survival is a declared future which many people live into every day either by choice or default. It is limited. Winning is defined as surviving, nothing more, nothing less. Nobody gets what they want, just one big compromise.

In a declared context and future born of possibility there are no built-in restrictions, no constraints imposed at the outset. Possibility comes from the future, not the past. It is from a place where nothing exists yet, the classic clean piece of paper on which to declare your dream.

A future possibility is a place from which to work where blame, resentment and mistrust are not of value. They kill possibility. There are no built-in assumptions of a way things are supposed to be. A possibility comes to life in a declaration, like the Declaration of Independence. Or JFK's declaration we will be the first nation to put a man on the moon. It is said from the future as an outcome, the means to achieve it are yet to be determined.

Sea Pines needs a new context and possibility. Not a retread of the old one. We need to declare the past complete, done, well done. If we could get to that coveted clean slate it would give everyone the freedom to generate something from nothing, with no history, and then keep refining it until it gets broad support. That would give us a new reality to live into...with nothing wrong and no way things should be, except consistent with the declared possibility. No one party starts with an advantage, a debt, or a presumption of "if you are winning, I must be losing". How exciting would it be to live and work and invest your time and money in a place like that? Recruiting people to participate on the board would be easy, funding would be easier to acquire, doing business inside the gate would be an assumption. We might regain the reputation of being a model world class resort, community, and town. Growing, thriving, a future not predicted but better for all.

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY

1. Where would you like to see Sea Pines in 5-10 years, and what do you propose we do to accomplish that? (continued)

My job as a board member is to engage my fellow board members and ultimately the community in developing and refining a clear statement of who we say we are as a community, inclusive of the Residential Property Owners, the Resort, and our Commercial interests. I feel we need to explore the notion of operating as partners for that future. I define partners as parties committed to the same future, have specific conditions of satisfaction that on achieved are evidence future or possibility is a reality and have a deadline. Finally, with this future defined it will drive our decisions and actions. Leaders generate possibilities.

2. What are your thoughts about the growing rate of daily tourist activity within Sea Pines?

Our beautiful place gets national and international recognition as one of the best island destinations. As the population grows so does demand for what we have.

However, this year a virus motivated people to leave hot spots and shutdowns for better weather and a less crowded place. Virtual work and schooling plus demand for what we enjoy here fueled rentals beyond expectations. A new reality emerged, wanted or not.

We rely on visitors to fund our communities needs through gate pass sales and supporting commercial interests' success. As we see the increasing number of owners choosing to rent their homes, we will see more guests plus a steady flow of visitors. All this demand supports strong real estate prices in Sea Pines. Most buyers were once a visitor or guests in a rental property. Not a bad story, but one that stresses our capacity in many ways.

I do not believe we want to suppress demand for what we all enjoy here as residents and property owners.

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY

2. What are your thoughts about the growing rate of daily tourist activity within Sea Pines? (continued)

Therefore, the question is how we handle our visitors and guests in a way that works for everyone. I believe investing in community improvements to handle the numbers makes sense, like bike trail improvements, trolleys, managed processes can make a difference. We will need to plan for surges in parking and transportation facilities. Provide clear communication of our aspirations and rules which can be monitored and enforced. Property management companies can help.

What steps would you recommend taking to restore the tranquility of life in Sea Pines?

We cannot go back in time, as much as we might like to. The forces that created the community are still present. It is up to us to identify specific concerns and address them as a challenge to resolve or manage better. An example is the work of ASPPPO on leaf blower noise which is well thought out and can make a real difference. When we work together by involving all the interested parties of our community using the rich talent base we have, we can make progress and solve problems.

I would like to see a shift in our conversations about issues... from identifying who or what is wrong, to instead asking what is missing which would make the greatest difference and resolve the concerns of the interested parties?

3. Greenwood Entrance: Please describe in some detail your vision for improvements to the Greenwood Drive entrance traffic flow and gate pass sales. In particular, please address the future use of the commercial property commonly referred to as the Gallery of Shops, that CSA purchased a couple of years ago between the current welcome center and Staples.

First, the Gallery of Shops purchase. Clearly, the decision and communication of the rationale was not sufficient to satisfy many property owners. That said I, believe having control of that site for both esthetic and possible future use is a good idea. It is an eyesore and needs to be torn down now. It makes the wrong first impression for our community and we can shape the site how we want it to be.

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY

3. Greenwood Entrance: Please describe in some detail your vision for improvements to the Greenwood Drive entrance traffic flow and gate pass sales. In particular, please address the future use of the commercial property commonly referred to as the Gallery of Shops, that CSA purchased a couple of years ago between the current welcome center and Staples. (continued)

The traffic problem seems to fall into two buckets: selling or distributing passes, and the physical capacity to handle the number of cars. Our gate personnel do a great job handling the hundreds of thousands of transactions. We can help them with improved technology and by adding another lane and guard station to handle the volume.

Selling passes has many variables. The day visitors, the Resort, other property management companies, and property owner guests all go through a process to physically receive their pass. Even if we can expand the physical access to move rapidly through the gate, everyone needs to get a pass. It would be useful based on my current knowledge, to lay out the sources, processes, and timing of the entire process end to end. This may reveal opportunities to re-engineer the process, the roles involved, and where if any technology changes could enhance the situation.

There are actions being planned and improvements to the process based on many hours of study, analysis, and vendor suggestion and I have not been involved in those efforts. As a result, I do not want to "step on" or redo any work that has already been undertaken.

If we can decide on the course of action on the "Shops" it will facilitate moving ahead on the physical expansion of the two lanes to three.

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY

4. Tower Beach Gate. What do you think needs to be done about the non-functioning automatic gate that was installed at Towers Beach a few years ago?

I would modify or replace it using proven and simple technology which could be a bar code or a chip-based approach. Access is intended for property owners and accompanied guests. The means of entry might be a modified property owners ID with a chip or barcode. CSA is currently implementing a new information system which integrates data across CSA departments. It would be desirable to integrate any information collected at the entry gate, but it is not a requirement at this time. That step can be completed later at the appropriate time. Based on a call with Toby McSwain, our head of Security, this solution is already in process and will be implemented very soon.

5. The Sea Pines Resort Beach Club: Please describe your recommendation for better parking at The Sea Pines Resort Beach Club during busy times. Specifically, what would you do to address the concerns of rental property owners and their guests?

There is limited space available at the Beach Club and designated overflow lots to address the overflow. Due to limited undeveloped or under-utilized space remote lots are a logical solution. The option of a parking garage could be undertaken but at significant expense and assuming it could be done esthetically appropriately.

Our trolley system is the conveyance for visitors to move from the lots to the beach. There may be a need for more remote pickup and drop-off of people in a way that serves our neighborhoods more efficiently.

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY

6. Special Tax District:

a. Do you support the special tax district that the CSA Board is recommending? Answer yes or no and explain your position.

I support addressing our funding needs now, and if the Special Tax District is the only viable solution, I would vote for it. I would strongly prefer a successful referendum because it is a simpler solution to explain and consistent with how we have operated, but we must fund the future.

We all realize the seventy five percent hurdle is extremely difficult to reach. It would be important to conduct a survey to assess the desire of the community before making the final choice. Openness, transparency, and inclusion of all constituents is critical.

I do believe by increasing transparency, through open meetings, far greater engagement of the community, hearing what people have to say, understanding their concerns, providing good information, and being candid we can meet the challenge of the 75% hurdle.

However, I also believe we need the next referendum to include reducing the seventy five percent to a lower number so we can effectively govern the community without all the expense and anxiety we currently endure.

b. If against the STD, specifically how would you raise funds?

As stated above, I prefer a referendum, but recognize we need to address the funding deficit now. Three years to resolve a financial problem is just too long. In the short term it may be prudent to borrow funds to accelerate the upgrading of our infrastructure. In doing so we take advantage of low interest rates and hedge against rising construction costs.

c. Do you think CSA's existing funding is adequate?

No. Our formula for increasing the annual fee is not sufficient to keep up with our aging roads, storm water systems, etc. I support adding a fixed increment of 2% above the current CPI based formula.

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY

7. Beyond the revenue challenges, what else do you see that the community should also consider accomplishing?

As I mentioned, Charles Fraser had a future he got up and lived into every day. We need a community generated future all interested parties can fully support as a community. That future would be the compass guiding our actions and decisions. It could be shared to prospective community members and be prominent in our communications and literature as a reminder to those who live here.

If a prospective real estate buyer were uncomfortable with any aspect of what we are committed to as a community, they would probably not invest here. The result would be fully informed buyers who will not be disappointed or frustrated by the forward progress of our community.

8. What are your feelings about the growing amount of rental properties in Sea Pines?

I am concerned about the rapid growth of rental properties. There are many consequences of this trend which need to be clarified and better understood.

We have seen technology disrupt how we educate people, live, shop, and work. Having a second home that can partially support itself is now more attractive than ever. Again, the good news is upward movement in real estate pricing, but the downside is more complexity and pressure on our infrastructure and staff.

The Strategic Planning Committee is going to dig into this issue, and I look forward to participating on that task force.