

Collaboration planned to benefit Orange Beach residents, add family-friendly beachfront destination restaurant

November 25, 2020

City of Orange Beach Release

A prime 8.7-acre beachfront lot once slated for two condo towers at heights of 37 and 36 stories and previously approved 276 units, now may be the future site of a beach for Orange Beach residents and the public to enjoy for generations to come as well as a family-friendly, stand-alone restaurant directly on the Gulf.

With time of the essence and an opportunity that will greatly benefit the public and preserve a beautiful view corridor at the base of Orange Beach Boulevard/Hwy. 161, the Orange Beach Planning Commission will hold a special-called meeting at 4 p.m. Monday, November 30th to consider giving the City Council a favorable recommendation to rezone the property from BR-2 (Beach Resort High Density) to PUD (Planned Unit Development). The council will hold a public hearing and first reading on the project on Tuesday, December 1st during its regular meeting, which will begin at 1 p.m. due to the Christmas tree lighting at 5:30 p.m.

If approved, the rezoning will be a key step toward a potential public-private collaboration between the City of Orange Beach and Island Entertainment, LLC which is owned by Flora-Bama co-owners John McInnis and Cameron Price. The partnership would split the purchase price of the prime beachfront property, owned by GCOF Orange Beach Gulf Front LLC (Nathan Cox), and the city would take ownership of half of the roughly 800 feet of beachfront and the public will have access to all 800 feet. In return, the CoastAL branded development will construct a restaurant and have shared-use parking with the city.

“As a city, we’ve been waiting a very long time for an opportunity like this,” Mayor Tony Kennon said. “We have an accelerated timeline as we approach the end of the year with a combination of factors including interest rates, a real estate closing deadline, and a projected 2022 spring opening of the restaurant. This property is truly the first glimpse of the Gulf for anyone driving south in Orange Beach. To have this development proposed with a low-rise restaurant, at three stories max, with mostly open space is really special. It continues the goal of this City Council to reduce density, where appropriate. The developers are locals and they love Orange Beach. If everything falls into place, this will preserve a special stretch of beachfront for our citizens to enjoy. We have our state beach accesses but this would be a much-needed quality of life improvement for our residents, who sacrifice a lot each summer during peak tourist season.”

Taking into account the high visibility of the property, a proposed landmark civic tower, about 40 feet tall, will be built at the base of Orange Beach Boulevard and tied into pedestrian friendly paths on the property. A future phase of the project may include a parking garage and open public space. An early plan to include a large condo tower in a later phase is now off the table.

In a statement from John McInnis and Cameron Price, “Our goal is to create something that doesn’t exist in the City of Orange Beach, and that is a true gathering place for the community on the beach. This project would accomplish that and would be in the center of the City at the intersection of 161 and the beach road. We are excited about this project and appreciate the city’s help in eliminating condos permanently from this property. It’s our belief that it’s the right thing to do for the future of our city and this lets the public have access to that view and property to enjoy”.

The developers aim to build a coastal destination restaurant similar to Shunk Gully Oyster Bar, which they established on 30A about three years ago which has become a popular attraction in that area. The project will be designed very “southern” and “coastal” to represent the Orange Beach area well.

For media information contact Marc Anderson, City of Orange Beach Special Projects Coordinator at manderson@orangebeachal.gov

Interview requests may be fulfilled Monday, November 30 or Tuesday, December 1 at Orange Beach City Hall.
