



## OUR VIEW



Source: City of Galveston

### At a glance

**What:** Special joint session of the Galveston City Council and the Galveston Planning Commission

**When:** 1 p.m. Tuesday

**Where:** City Hall, 823 Rosenberg Ave.

## What will development look like?

The public will get a chance to hear about Galveston's proposed land development regulations on Tuesday.

The city council and the planning commission scheduled a joint session to hear public comments.

What should you expect?

You should expect to hear some praise for the planning commission. Even if you are furious over some of the proposals — and some people are — this was an achievement.

Everybody knew that Galveston's regulations were a mess. Through the decades, the rules accreted — in zoning and building codes, in overlay zones, in special districts. The rules were in more than one place. They were often confusing and sometimes contradictory.

The planning commission spent three years slogging through them and has proposed rules that are shorter, simpler and clearer.

That's a remarkable public service. The council should recognize that.

You should also expect some criticism of the regulations. That's natural. The rules for developing property cover a lot of ground. It would be miraculous if everyone agreed about everything.

Most of the remaining

disagreement has focused on two areas:

First, relatively late in this three-year process, the rules became less restrictive on the height of buildings south of the seawall between Stewart Beach and 10th Street. The people who support high-rises along that part of the beach appear to be outnumbered by people who do not.

Second, the rules regulating signs struck some people as too permissive. They contend that the rules will encourage businesses to build more, bigger and taller signs to try to stand out in the increasingly dense thickets of competing signs.

It's hard to see consensus for either set of proposed rules. The business community has spoken in support of the proposed regulations. But you don't have to work hard to find influential people in business who disagree with the proposals on height restrictions and on signs.

A third issue deserves some discussion, although critics in this area are fewer. The city has an Erosion Response Plan that is critical. If the city fails to comply with this plan, the state can rescind its right to collect beach-user fees. The question is whether the rules for the beaches should be reflected in the land devel-

opment regulations. The city's planning department has recommended that the beach and dune regulations be handled as a separate ordinance. But some people think that just puts rules that affect development in a separate document — a recipe to repeat failures of the past. Should those rules be included in land development regulations?

That's an excellent question to take up Tuesday.

And then what?

The council could, after hearing from the public, quickly approve the regulations as proposed. That would be a serious mistake.

The proposed rules are still lengthy and complex. Ordinary citizens should be given the time, at the end of the process, to see how the proposals would affect them and to talk to their elected representatives.

The council could — and should — address the rough spots. It could do that in a couple of ways.

The council could send the proposed rules back to the planning commission with recommendations for revisions. Or it could thank the planning commission and take up the work itself.

Perhaps the most interesting decision the council will make is on how to proceed.

• Heber Taylor

## Grandmother's manners never wavered

Leonard Woolsey

My grandmother was big on manners. In fact, her dedication to manners once put her in a letter-writing exchange with the most powerful man on the planet.

Last week, while going through boxes of old photographs, I ran across a small picture frame with a letter addressed to my grandmother on the inside. The words, pressed into the now faded letterhead of the White House, were type-written and thanked her for her graciousness and the opportunity to meet.

My grandmother, who only dreamed of one day reaching 5-foot tall, never forgot to demonstrate the very best of manners at every turn.

This lady, who immigrated to the United States from Scotland after the age of 60, believed guests were to be warmly welcomed and treated as if they were the longest of lost friends.

Never did a visit to her small apartment go by without the obligatory serving of hot tea, alongside a few small biscuits or cookies.

And so leads to the day she found herself in the arms of the president of the United States.

Gerald Ford, president at the time, was in town to visit my grandmother's adopted hometown. And as happened in those days, he scheduled a stroll through the streets to meet and visit with people.

My grandmother, who had never seen a president before, found it as good a time as any to go see what all the fuss was about.

The day of the event, President Ford, accompanied by a handful of Secret Service agents, began his stroll through the small town. My grandmother, being of very modest stature and in her mid-70s at the time, somehow found her way to front of the crowd as the President strolled by.

As the President moved closer to the crowd, people naturally jostled for a better chance to see a living President.



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And it was right then, as the crowd pushed forward, that my diminutive grandmother found herself being knocked forward and down onto the street — only to be caught by the arms of the President. Helping her regain her balance, the two exchanged a few words and he graciously helped her back to the curb.

I'm sure my grandmother was bit embarrassed by the entire event — the unintended attention surely was not in her plans — but the kindness of the President stayed with her.

The next day my grandmother found a small piece of paper in her apartment and wrote a thank-you note to the President — as she would have for anyone who'd demonstrated the least bit of kindness in her direction. And then, putting a stamp to the envelope, she mailed her words to 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. — and thought nothing of it afterward.

Then, the unusual happened. Soon afterward, a rather unusual envelope arrived in my grandmother's daily mail. Inside she found a personally signed note from President Gerald Ford thanking her for her kind letter and the pleasure to meet her — albeit under such unusual circumstances.

We learn many lessons in life — but what my grandmother taught me is you never know where life will lead you when you make sure to do the right thing toward others. And for her, after finding herself in the arms of the most powerful man on the planet, her dedication to such a principle helped her develop a friendship with a most unusual pen pal.

## A living wage is good for all

Over two years ago on June 1, 2012 Archbishop emeritus of the Galveston-Houston Diocese Joseph A. Fiorenza wrote a guest column in the Houston Chronicle concerning the struggle of Houston janitors to get a higher wage. He said in part:

“The concept of the common good should never be forgotten. All the benefits of a well-ordered society — food, medicine, education, work, decent housing, security, peace, justice and other human values — comprise the common good. The common good relates well

### Guest column



Steve McIntyre lives in Galveston.

to the American spirit of fairness and equal opportunity. It should never be the right of only those who are more fortunate. Every person should be able to share the common good available to all Houstonians. The janitors should not be forced to choose between buying food or medicine for

their families, or between paying a doctor or rent. They will not be forced into these tragic decisions if a new contract provides a living wage for their labor.”

It is hard to argue that a hard-working family should not be able to survive in Houston or Galveston. You can read the entire column of Archbishop Emeritus Fiorenza at [www.gulfcoastinterfaith.org/resources/employment](http://www.gulfcoastinterfaith.org/resources/employment).

Are the hard-working families in Galveston surviving on their wages or are they standing in the growing lines at the food pantries and

food stamp office to survive?

Are they waiting to get in line to apply for housing assistance when the application process reopens next year or the year after? Who is paying for their struggle to survive?

The articles and editorials at the website of Gulf Coast Interfaith that talk about decent wages for workers may be helpful to you if what Fiorenza has said has caused you to pause and wonder about the fairness of the wages paid to our hard-working friends and neighbors in Galveston.

## From the files of Texas' oldest newspaper

From the archives of The Daily News for November 30:

» In 1914, Congregation B'nai Israel held its annual election of officers in Galveston.

» In 1914, Galveston's school superintendent announced the opening of a new West End public school.

» In 1964, work was getting under way on actual construction of a new 61st Street Project.

» In 1964, Perry M. Talbot, national secretary and treasurer of Travelers

Protective Association of America, from St. Louis, Mo., was to make an official visit to Galveston.

» In 1989, Doug Marchand, port director for Galveston Wharves, said that low productivity by Galveston longshoremen was not the reason Galveston's port lost some sacked flour shipments.

» In 1989, Chairman Don Mafrige said that the Park Board of Trustees discussed buying the struggling Sea-Arama Marineworld.

From Staff Reports