

Jan 03 2005

## **Will Holmes Harbor get a new marina?**

**By GAYLE SARAN**

A Freeland developer has cleared the first hurdle in his quest to transform a ramshackle pier and dilapidated pilings on **Holmes Harbor** into an operating marina. The now almost-ghostly pier, built in the 1960s, will be replaced by a new, large public pier, pending approval by county and state regulators.

Developer Mark Schuster's expansion plans at the **Holmes Harbor** Golf and Beach Club include the completed renovation of the golf course restaurant and pro-shop and improved golf links. Still in the planning stage is the waterfront development and the construction of 35 new homes.

The waterfront access and housing development is the next step in a five-year expansion plan for the **Holmes Harbor** Golf and Beach Club.

Just completed between Nov. 17 and Dec. 17 was a public comment period on the waterfront permit. Schuster's plan to build a 280-foot pier below the clubhouse needs approval by Island County. Evaluating the public comments on the project for the county is shoreline planner Joe Burcar. Burcar said he has read "a dozen comments from community members." Some individuals, he said, see the reconstruction of the old dock and piers as an "improvement and benefit to the entire area."

Burcar said some others voiced concerns about the aesthetic impact of the project. Some were worried about the "intensive use" a marina would bring, while others were worried that new marina structures might pose a hazard to navigation.

Schuster is requesting a permit to repair a existing bulkhead and access trail on the north-side of his Beachfire Grill restaurant, to build the pier, to build a 4-foot by 60-foot ramp leading to the pier, and two 10-foot by 220-foot floats. The floats would allow boaters to tie up at the pier.

Schuster, who is the CEO of the Seattle-based The Schuster Group, said this week he has received a number of favorable comments about the proposed waterfront improvements.

"We are receiving tremendous support from the community," Shuster said.

In the past, he said, there has been a private marina at the golf course. Schuster said the marina he hopes to build will be open to the public.

Schuster said he is aware of the some of the negative comments but "they are more personal opinions and not relevant to the (Island County) code."

Shuster said the waterfront development will occur in two phases: The first will be construction of the pier, the ramp and one of the two floats.

No gasoline will be sold at the marina.

## New homes in 2005

Simultaneous with the the permitting process for the marina, Schuster will be building 35 new homes around his golf course over the next couple years. Foundations for most of the homes will be poured in mid-January. Schuster has entered into a partnership with Cam-West, a Kirkland-based homebuilder.

Todd Bitts, a real estate broker with Coldwell Banker who represents The Schuster Group in the sale of these new homes, said he has received a number of inquires about when the homes would be ready for occupancy.

The original **Holmes Harbor** development was platted for 400 lots. Only about half of those lots have homes on them currently.

Nine new homes located next to the 11th tee will be priced from \$249,000 to \$289,000, while 21 view homes priced between \$325,000 and \$425,000 will be constructed along the 18th fairway.

Bitts said those 30 homes should be on the market by mid 2005.

Schuster purchased the golf course from former professional basetball player Jack Sikma for about \$2 million in July 2003. He spent about \$1 million remodeling the clubhouse to turn it into a waterfront restaurant and bar.

Schuster has said his future plans may include building either a high-end inn or condominiums on six acres of **Holmes Harbor** waterfront he owns near the clubhouse building.

---

© Copyright 2003 South Whidbey Record  
Gayle Saran  
South Whidbey Record