

Commentary: DeBordieu homeowners have the right to protect their property

BY DON WEAVER

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Don Weaver, president of the S.C. Association of Taxpayers.

The old saying “All politics is local” not only applies to how politicians make decisions about priorities, but newspapers and other opinion leaders as well.

The Post and Courier which, to its credit, has become a major statewide influencer by adding resources when other papers are cutting staff, nonetheless has adopted a parochial, “Don’t do as I do but as I say do” mindset on pressing environmental matters.

Charleston’s efforts to protect public and private property from rising ocean levels are Exhibit A.

Work has begun to repair Charleston’s Low Battery from encroaching sea waters, “the existential threat to Charleston,” according to Mayor John Tecklenburg. “This piece of infrastructure was worn out and tired and needed to be replaced,” he said. Private property behind it could not survive without a higher and stronger overhaul.

Indeed. Three years ago, waves from Hurricane Matthew attacked the seawall and washed over it, putting an end to the idea that the expensive public and private property could survive without a higher and stronger overhaul.

Charleston has embarked on a \$64 million reconstruction of the Low Battery seawall, all funded by the taxpayers. The city reportedly is preparing to ask the State Infrastructure Bank for a \$32 million grant, with local taxes funding the rest.

A January editorial in *The Post and Courier* assigned near-godlike meaning to the project, writing that it shows “how mankind’s best hope for addressing the economic, humanitarian and, for coastal cities such as Charleston, existential challenges of climate change will come from the bottom up, not top down.”

Outside of Charleston, however, the newspaper and self-described environmentalists have a decidedly more pessimistic take on similar efforts to protect private property and the derived economic benefits.

There are many examples, but let’s use DeBordieu community in Georgetown County as an example. An economic study determined that DeBordieu has an economic impact of \$220 million a year on the county, with about 3,000 jobs attributed directly or indirectly to it. If property values in DeBordieu decline, it will have a ripple effect throughout the entire county.

During its entire existence, DeBordieu residents have spent about \$17 million in beach renourishment efforts themselves without one penny of public dollars. Their actions should be applauded.

In fact, DHEC recently issued a permit based upon the state’s Beachfront Management Act that will allow DeBordieu to construct a beach nourishment project, including three groins, that will mitigate erosion.

Despite this, defeat of the DeBordieu seawall received support from this newspaper. “Unfortunately, some DeBordieu property owners may have to suffer for it. But trying to buttress homes against the ocean is ultimately futile,” according to the editorial.

Which of course, begs the question: Why is it OK to let private property legally built decades ago on DeBordieu fall into the ocean, but it is not OK to let the same fate befall Charleston?

The South Carolina Association of Taxpayers fights for the rights of taxpayers and property owners wherever they are. While we support Charleston's plan to protect the Low Battery, we also support the homeowners of DeBordeiu's effort to protect theirs.

Instead of trying to pick winners and losers on beach renourishment, our state and local governments should applaud the DeBordieu community's private efforts to preserve their property tax values.

Don Weaver is president of the S.C Association of Taxpayers.