

# MULTI-TASKING MAYOR

For recently elected Drew Laughlin, it's a balancing act

**H**e came to the island for a job, but Drew Laughlin stayed because of the natural beauty and more casual lifestyle he discovered. Three decades later, following the Dec. 7 swearing in ceremony, Laughlin became the eighth mayor to serve Hilton Head Island.

"I believe in Hilton Head Island as a refuge from the commonplace," Laughlin said, "a sanctuary where people live in balance with nature; a place that does not try to follow trends ... a place that visitors do not want to leave."

Hilton Head affords unique opportunities to meet interesting people you might not find in other places, and Laughlin recalled a time when he saw Bill Clinton at Truffles Café before Clinton was elected president. He noted that a lot of the people who have retired here have had very rich lives in terms of what they have done and achieved, and are actively involved in the community.

Although Laughlin didn't see himself as a politician when he was asked to run for Town Council, he believed that a working person's point of view needed to be represented on council and that, "Striking a balance between economic preservation and prosperity required that working people be involved in policy making decisions."

After seven years on the council, Laughlin felt he was the best contender when Tom Peebles decided not to seek reelection last summer.

When it comes to the arts, Laughlin says he has no artistic talent. A fan of jazz, he said he'd love to play the piano or upright bass. He feels



the arts are extremely important to the island's quality of life, even though he doesn't make it to local venues as often as he would like.

The arts are a big attraction to visitors, and Laughlin feels more affluent visitors may consider the arts a prerequisite to spending significant time here.

"Hilton Head Island is a beautiful, wonderful and culturally stimulating place to live and visit because of quality organizations like the Arts Center," Laughlin said.

Laughlin said the Town is a partner to arts organizations like the Arts Center. He stressed that the arts are not just for visitors – having various forms is important to people you want to attract as permanent residents – and feels residents deserve great experiences.

"We believe that the Arts Center enhances the cultural and educational components of Hilton Head Island," Laughlin said. "Residents and visitors to Hilton Head Island and students across the region have greatly benefited from the

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unique arts-enriching experiences and opportunities that the Arts Center has provided through its stellar productions and educational programs.”

During his rare free time, the mayor enjoys reading, listening to music and taking his boat out on local waterways with his wife, Jane. His second grandchild was recently born in Okinawa, Japan, where his son is stationed as an Air Force officer. Laughlin also has two grown daughters,

and his wife Jane has a daughter as well.

Laughlin feels it's both an honor and privilege to serve as mayor, a job which he balances with a full-time law practice. After a recent meeting – as he prepared to rush out the door to his office at Town Hall – he said with a laugh that he's still learning how to strike that balance. Perhaps it's not the best time to start those piano lessons.