

Lawyer in Sea Pines Case Visits Rotary

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BY E.J. SCHULTZ, The Island Packet

The lawyer who won a \$7.8 million jury verdict against the Sea Pines Co. last week was on Hilton Head Island on Thursday to give a speech about the importance of juries to the American justice system.

"The jury system is the most democratic institution in the United States of America," Richard Rosen told the Hilton Head Island Rotary Club at its weekly luncheon meeting at the Port Royal Clubhouse.

Rosen, president of the South Carolina Bar Association, represents Tom DiVenere and Pete Pomranz, two businessmen who last week were awarded \$7.8 million by a Beaufort County jury in a breach-of-contract case against Sea Pines over the development of the TidePointe retirement community.

Even though he was in Sea Pines' backyard, Rosen, who lives in Charleston, did not comment on the case during the speech. But in an interview afterwards, he discussed the \$7.8 million verdict, which Sea Pines plans to fight through post-trial motions and a possible appeal.

"In this case it was a simple question of if there was a contract, did (Sea Pines) violate the contract?" he said.

In their civil lawsuit, DiVenere and Pomranz claim that Sea Pines squeezed them out of the TidePointe project after the two men laid the groundwork for the south-island community, in which Sea Pines was an original partner.

The \$7.8 million verdict represents lost development fees and ownership stakes the two men say they are owed.

Rosen said the two men spent about a year trying to settle the case outside of court but negotiations never became serious.

The \$7.8 million verdict, Rosen said, was not the highest dollar amount he had ever won, but it was "pretty significant for me."

Rosen's appearance at the Rotary Club, which came just a week after he won one of his largest verdicts against one of the area's biggest companies, was booked months ago, he said.

It was "completely coincidental," he said.

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