

Emerald Tidings / Island Review – January 18, 2006 Print Edition

Town Reaches Agreement to Preserve “Gateway” Entrance into Emerald Isle

Residents and visitors all enjoy the natural appearance at the entrance to Town when arriving in Emerald Isle via the Cameron Langston Bridge. The preservation of the natural appearance of the “Gateway” was identified as a key goal in the Town’s 2004 Land Use Plan, and the Town has actively pursued the achievement of this goal since that time.

The Town is pleased to announce that an agreement has been reached to preserve the eastern side of the “Gateway” entrance in perpetuity. Ms. Martha Howe and her family, the owners of the 4+ acre tract on the eastern side of NC 58 between the base of the bridge and Coast Guard Road, have agreed to grant a 30 ft. wide conservation easement to the Town to protect all natural vegetation and topography along this stretch. In exchange, the Town has agreed to pave the currently unimproved portion of Crew Drive on the opposite side of the Howe property. The Board of Commissioners approved a resolution authorizing this agreement at their November 2005 regular meeting, and final legal documents are currently being drawn up for execution. Construction of the improved Crew Drive will occur later this year.

The Town extends its sincere gratitude to Ms. Howe and her family for their cooperation on this important achievement for the Town. The Town remains committed to preserving the natural “Gateway” appearance, and has been and will continue working with the property owners on the western side of the “Gateway” to preserve this area.

Town Pursuing Traffic Improvements at Intersection of Coast Guard Road and NC 58; Construction Now Targeted for January - February 2007

The intersection of Coast Guard Road and NC 58 often experiences traffic congestion during the summer months, and the Town has been working for the past several months to design improvements to ease traffic congestion at this location. Town staff, the Board of Commissioners, and the NC Department of Transportation have all reviewed and approved a conceptual plan to construct additional dedicated turn lanes and lengthen existing turn lanes on Coast Guard Road at this intersection.

The Town originally hoped to construct these improvements in early 2006, however, design, permitting, bidding, and cost issues have delayed the project such that the work can not be constructed in the originally planned January - February 2006 time frame. The Town is reluctant to construct this project at other times during the year due to the increased population of the Town in the spring, summer, and fall months, and due to the fact that Coast Guard Road is the only access to the residences in the western 1/3 of Town. Construction of the project will likely result in significant disruption to traffic patterns at this intersection, and the Town seeks to minimize the inconvenience and disruption as much as possible. As a result, the planned construction date has been pushed back to January - February 2007. The delayed construction date should provide ample time to adequately resolve design, permitting, bidding, and cost issues associated with the project.

The new Bell Cove Village retail shopping center at the corner of Coast Guard Road and NC 58 is scheduled to open in spring 2006, and the owner will be installing a right-turn lane into the shopping center at the entrance-only across from Reed Drive. In an effort to coordinate the new right-turn lane with the Town's future improvements, the Town will be constructing a limited portion of the planned future improvements in the next several weeks. These limited improvements will not impact traffic patterns significantly during construction.

The Point Continues to Accrete Naturally After Completion of Bogue Inlet Project

Just over 8 months after completion of the Bogue Inlet channel relocation project, the Town continues to see gradual natural accretion of sand at The Point. Approximately 250 ft of additional beach has formed adjacent to two of the eight homes protected by sandbags. Additionally, the depths of the old channel adjacent to the other sandbags have shallowed considerably (as much as 20 ft. shallower in some locations), and the old channel has narrowed and moved slightly to the west away from the homes protected by the sandbags. The new channel constructed by the Town in the middle of Bogue Inlet remains well-developed, and is approximately twice as wide as the old channel.

The reopening of the Coast Guard channel as a result of Hurricane Ophelia has complicated the situation somewhat, however, it does not appear to have negatively impacted the anticipated accretion thus far. The Town is pleased with the developments thus far, and remains optimistic that the old channel will completely fill in and re-establish the historical spit within the next 4-6 years, as predicted prior to the construction of the project.



The above aerial photograph was taken in mid-November 2005, and illustrates the dominance of the new channel in Bogue Inlet and the accretion that has occurred at The Point since completion of the project in April 2005.

Town Awarded CAMA Grants to Improve Handicapped Access to the Beach

The Town has been awarded two grants from the NC Division of Coastal Management to construct new handicapped accessible observation areas and ramps to the beach strand. The total amount of both grants is \$107,250, and the Town will provide a local match of \$35,750. The local match has already been included in the FY 05-06 budget in anticipation of this grant award.

The first grant will enable the construction of a 480 sq. ft. handicapped accessible observation area and ramp to the beach strand at the Western Ocean Regional Access (WORA). The new observation area and ramp will be located near the western boundary (Queens Court side) of the WORA, and will also relieve pedestrian traffic congestion on the existing walkway to the beach. The second grant will also enable the construction of a 480 sq. ft. handicapped accessible observation area and ramp to the beach strand at the Eastern Ocean Regional Access (EORA). The new observation area and ramp will be located near the western boundary (Pier Pointe side) of the EORA, and will also relieve pedestrian traffic congestion on the existing walkway to the beach.

Construction of these new facilities will occur in fall 2006, and should be ready for public use prior to the 2007 summer season.

Additional State Tax on Cable Television Bills to Begin in February 2006

Emerald Isle residents and property owners currently pay a 3% local franchise fee for cable television service, and these funds are collected by Time Warner Cable and remitted to the Town. Effective February 1, 2006, a new 7% State tax on cable television service will take effect, and will replace the 3% local franchise fee.

At the current 3% local franchise fee rate, the State would have retained 4% and would have remitted 3% to the Town to replace the local franchise fee revenues. Because State law allows up to 5% of the total 7% tax to be remitted to local governments, the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously at its December 2005 regular meeting to increase the local franchise fee to 5%. As a result, the State will now retain 2%, and remit 5% to the Town. Although the new State tax will increase the cost to the consumer, the Town's recent action will at least enable more of these funds to remain in Emerald Isle as opposed to being sent to Raleigh.

Police Chief Bill Hargett Earns Advanced Law Enforcement Certificate

New Police Chief Bill Hargett recently earned the Advanced Law Enforcement Certificate issued by the State of North Carolina to law enforcement officers who have significant experience in law enforcement and have completed significant educational requirements. The Town congratulates Chief Hargett on this accomplishment, and greatly values his service to the Town