

Island Review / Emerald Tidings – February 16, 2005 Print Edition

Pat McElraft Appointed to Carteret County Board of Commissioners

Emerald Isle Town Commissioner Pat McElraft was officially appointed to the Carteret County Board of Commissioners on January 24, 2005. Pat McElraft was recommended by the Carteret County Republican Party to fill the County Commissioners seat vacated by Jack Dawsey of Cape Carteret, and was unanimously appointed by the remaining six County Commissioners. She will serve the remainder of a term that expires in December 2006.

Commissioner McElraft officially resigned from the Emerald Isle Board of Commissioners on January 25, 2005. She had just completed the first year of a four-year term on the Emerald Isle Board of Commissioners, having been elected to a four-year term in November 2003 after receiving one of the two highest vote totals in that election. Commissioner McElraft served the Town as a Town Commissioner since November 1999, when she was elected to her first two-year term. She was re-elected in November 2001 to another two-year term, and was re-elected in November 2003 to a four-year term. She has served the Town continuously for the past five years.

All of us at the Town of Emerald Isle thank Commissioner McElraft for her contributions to the Town, and wish her great success at the County level. The Town is pleased to have one of Emerald Isle's own serving on the Carteret County Board of Commissioners, and we look forward to her service. She is the first Emerald Isle resident to serve on the Carteret County Board of Commissioners since Sam Stell served from 1996 through 2001.

Pete Allen Appointed to Emerald Isle Board of Commissioners

The Emerald Isle Board of Commissioners turned to a familiar face to fill the vacancy created on the Town Board by the departure of Pat McElraft. Former Mayor and Town Manager Pete Allen was appointed by the remaining four members of the Town Board at their special meeting on January 25, 2005.

Commissioner Allen will serve out the remainder of a term that expires in December 2005 that was previously held by Commissioner Nita Hedreen. Prior to Commissioner Allen's appointment, Commissioner Hedreen also resigned from her seat and was then reappointed to serve the remainder of Pat McElraft's term that expires in December 2007. The Board of Commissioners made this decision in order to insure that the longer term would be occupied by the candidate with the next-highest vote total from the November 2003 election, which was Commissioner Hedreen.

Commissioner Allen brings years of experience in local government to the Town Board, having also served as Franklin County Manager, Carteret County Manager, and Atlantic Beach Town Manager prior to his retirement in November 2004. We wish Commissioner Allen the best in his new role, and welcome him back to Emerald Isle Town government.

Town Awarded Grant Funds to Improve Parking Area at Western Ocean Regional Access

The Town was recently awarded a \$120,000 grant from the NC Division of Coastal Management to pave the parking area at the Town's Western Ocean Regional Access and install a storm water management system for the parking area. The Town will match the grant with \$40,000 of Town funds that was included in the FY 05-06 Town budget adopted by the Board of Commissioners last June.

The parking area will be paved with asphalt and will utilize underground storm water infiltration devices to control the first 2 inches of rainfall on the site. This strategy should enable the Town to maintain the nearly 250 parking spaces at this facility, which continues to experience high usage throughout the year. The improvement of the parking area will complete the development of this first-class public access and parking facility, which was initially opened by the Town in 2000. The Western Ocean Regional Access is located off of Islander Drive near the Cameron Langston Bridge (NC 58).

Special thanks to Alesia Sanderson, Parks and Recreation Director, for her efforts to secure these grant funds and

improve public beach access and parking throughout Emerald Isle. The parking area at the Western Ocean Regional Access will likely be paved in the fall of 2005 in order to avoid any conflicts with the Bogue Inlet Channel / Western Phase Beach Nourishment Project currently under construction through late March and the upcoming summer season when the parking area will be in high demand.

The Town is pleased to be able to improve this facility for the benefit of our residents, property owners, and visitors. The Town strives to provide convenient and plentiful public access and parking along its entire 12 miles of ocean beach. There are over 60 public beach access locations in Emerald Isle, with most serving permanent residents, second home owners, and overnight guests renting vacation homes. The Town also operates 3rd Street Park (located on the east end of Town) with parking for 12 vehicles. The Eastern Ocean Regional Access is located near mile marker 15 on NC 58, and offers parking for 250 vehicles. The Town's newest parking area, Station Street Park, is located near The Point at the west end of Town, with space for 16 vehicles at the corner of Station Street and Coast Guard Road. Public parking is also available at Merchants Park along NC 58 in the central business district and at the Town Hall complex at mile marker 19 on NC 58. Both of these sites are located only a short walk from the beach.

Next Property Revaluation Scheduled for 2007

In December, the Carteret County Board of Commissioners approved a motion to conduct the next County-wide property revaluation in 2007, two years earlier than previously scheduled. All tax values in the County and the Town are currently based on a 2001 appraisal (regardless of when the property was constructed or purchased), and property values throughout Carteret County have appreciated considerably since that time.

Under NC law, all counties must conduct a revaluation at least every 8 years, but also have the authority to conduct revaluations more frequently. Carteret County switched to a 4-year cycle after the 1997 revaluation, and implemented the latest revaluation in 2001. The County switched back to an 8-year cycle after the 2001 revaluation, and announced plans to conduct the next revaluation in 2009. After the recent election of 3 new County Commissioners in November 2004, the County established 2007 as the next revaluation year, with intentions to return to a 4-year cycle following the 2007 revaluation. The Carteret County Board of Commissioners cited the rapidly appreciating real estate market and tax equity as their motivation for making this change.

The Town of Emerald Isle expects to see a significant increase of the Town's total tax base with the 2007 revaluation. The Town's current total tax base is approaching \$1.4 billion, and this figure is expected to nearly or more than double by 2007. The Town will strive to reduce the Town's tax rate to a revenue-neutral level at that time, as we continue our efforts to provide the best possible local government services at the lowest possible tax rate.

Long-Serving Firefighter Wally Pruiett Retires

Fire Engineer Walter (Wally) E. Pruiett retired with more than 25 years of combined service between the Town of Emerald Isle and Morehead City on January 31st, 2005.

Wally began his fire service career with the Town of Emerald Isle in April 1990 after more than 10 years of service with the Town of Morehead City as a mechanic. Wally had already been a volunteer firefighter with several local volunteer fire departments when he decided to become a paid firefighter for Emerald Isle, and he never lost the volunteer firefighter spirit. Through the years Wally has volunteered at several area volunteer fire departments which include Wildwood, Broad and Gales Creek, Swansboro, Rhodes Town, and Western Carteret volunteer fire departments. Wally still serves as a part-time paid member at Western Carteret Fire Department.

Engineer Pruiett's dedication to the preservation of life and property, his untiring efforts to train and maintain his state certifications, and to volunteer for so many years show the caliber of person Wally is. Wally will surely be missed by the residents, property owners, and visitors to Emerald Isle, and especially his colleagues at the Emerald Isle Fire

Department.

Best wishes to Wally for a happy retirement!