

## **Emerald Tidings / Island Review – July 16 Print Edition**

### **Recent Storm Water Flooding Along Coast Guard Road Corridor**

Emerald Isle (and much of North Carolina and the entire East Coast) received a tremendous amount of rain during the months of May and June. Nearly 10 inches of rain fell in May, followed by another 5.5 inches during the first half of June. (The average rainfall historically for each month is approximately 4.5 inches). This rain caused neighborhood flooding in Deer Horn Dunes and Sea Dunes, resulting in standing water of up to 12-13 inches on some Town streets in early June.

The Town utilized a permanent pump on Doe Drive to relieve flooding on that street. Storm water was pumped to a low swale on Ocean Drive, and the use of this low swale was able to relieve the flooding on Doe Drive without necessitating any pumping to the ocean beach. Pumping to this low swale was intermittent at times due to overflow from the Ocean Drive swale, however, Town staff were able to regulate the flows to relieve the flooding on Doe Drive and avoid significant overflow flooding on Ocean Drive. Deer Horn Drive was also heavily flooded in the low trough at mid-block, and the Town had to ultimately pump this water to the ocean beach with portable pumps and old fire hose. (The NC Division of Water Quality (NC DWQ) and NC Shellfish Sanitation Section were advised, and required advisories were posted on the beach.) The pumping of this water to the ocean beach greatly reduced the flooding on Deer Horn, however, groundwater recharge continued to cover the road with approximately 2-3 inches of water after pumping to the ocean beach ceased. Water from Fawn Drive was relayed with a portable pump and old fire hose to both Deer Horn Drive and Doe Drive, and was ultimately reduced over time. The Town also pumped water with a portable pump and old fire hose from Conch Court to an existing storm drain in Ocean Oaks to relieve flooding in that area of Sea Dunes.

The Town attempts to provide any assistance possible when neighborhoods in this area of Town are flooded after heavy rainfall events. Town staff devoted significant additional work hours to relieving the flooding in these neighborhoods. The public must recognize, however, that the Town has limited options for pumping storm water in these situations. The NC Division of Water Quality has ruled that the Town may not pump storm water runoff to either the ocean beach or the sound, and that pumping to the ocean beach is only permitted in "emergency" situations. The NC DWQ has ruled that an "emergency situation" occurs when floodwaters reach a level of 14 inches above the road surface. In this most recent situation, the Town delayed pumping to the beach for approximately a week and a half because water levels on the roads remained at approximately 7 – 9 inches. When the water levels rose as high as 12 inches, Town staff determined that a public health "emergency" did in fact exist, and made the decision to pump to the ocean beach. Although the water levels did not reach the 14-inch threshold, the NC DWQ recognized the Town's predicament, and past cooperation, and did not object to the pumping.

The Town regrets that the residents and property owners in these neighborhoods had to endure this nuisance flooding for such a long period of time. The simple reason for the delay is that the Town did not have an effective and efficient place to discharge the storm water that would be permitted by the NC DWQ. The Town is, however, seeking both long-term and short-term solutions to this problem. In the long-term, the Town is currently in the permitting / design phase of a major project to relieve flooding along the entire Coast Guard Road corridor. The project involves the installation of fixed pumps and piping at 8 locations, with discharge to a recently purchased 40-acre tract of land on the north side of Coast Guard Road. This project is still in the permitting / design phase, and is not expected to be operational until summer 2005.

In the short-term, the Town is planning to install a conduit under Coast Guard Road to pump storm water with portable pumps and old fire hose to the new 40-acre site if additional flooding occurs prior to completion of the larger project. This new conduit will allow fire hose to run from the affected neighborhoods to the discharge site without disrupting traffic flow or creating a safety hazard on Coast Guard Road. We hope to have this conduit installed within the next month.

The Town Manager is currently exploring permitting issues for this approach with the NC DWQ, and the Town is hopeful that it will be able to utilize this site prior to formal permitting for the larger project. The Town Manager has also requested that the NC DWQ reconsider the 14 inch threshold, and revise it downward to 10 inches, which is the height that a police car sits off the road surface. The Town awaits NC DWQ's response to this request. Finally, the Town Manager is investigating other, high-ground lots in the vicinity of the problem areas for potential pumping.

Town staff, the Mayor, and the Board of Commissioners are all concerned about this issue and truly want to help our residents and property owners. We are doing all we can to relieve the flooding problems, however, the Town's options are limited by higher levels of government. Other towns on Bogue Banks, including Pine Knoll Shores, and Atlantic Beach, have experienced similar problems over the past couple of months, and are also seeking solutions for their frustrated residents and property owners.

Residents and property owners are encouraged to please be patient and recognize that the Town is doing all that it can to implement effective and legal solutions to this problem.

### **FY 03-04 Budget Adopted – Tax Rate Decreases**

The Board of Commissioners adopted the FY 2003-2004 budget at their regular meeting on June 10. The budget reflects a 1-cent decrease in the General Fund property tax rate; down from 18.5 cents in FY 02-03 to 17.5 cents. This tax rate decrease will result in an approximately \$21 decrease in the average property owner's tax bill in FY 03-04. Taxpayers with high value properties will see a slightly larger decrease, while those with lower value properties will enjoy a slightly smaller decrease than the \$21 average.

The Town's total budget for FY 2003-2004 is approximately \$8.8 million. This figure includes a total General Fund budget of approximately \$6.2 million and a total Beach Nourishment Debt Service Reserve Fund (used to retire the beach nourishment bonds; primary revenues are the 48-cent and 3-cent special district taxes) of approximately \$2.6 million.

The Board of Commissioners voted to eliminate the 1-cent from the General Fund that has historically been reserved for beach nourishment activities indefinitely. The 1-cent reduction in the General Fund tax rate was enacted as a result of a projected future surplus in the Beach Nourishment Debt Service Reserve Fund after the full retirement of the beach nourishment bonds. The continuation of the 1-cent would have yielded a projected future surplus of approximately \$2.4 million, while the elimination of the 1-cent is expected to yield a projected future surplus of approximately \$1.1 million.

### **Planting New Dune Vegetation and Proper Care of Existing Dune Vegetation Pays Off for Everyone**

It's no secret that vegetation helps to stabilize our dunes, and that healthy dunes provide important storm protection, wildlife habitat, and aesthetic value. Oceanfront property owners are encouraged to care for existing dune vegetation and plant new dune vegetation where appropriate. The rest of our permanent and second-homeowner population, and our welcomed visitors are encouraged to respect our dunes by staying off the dunes, keeping children and pets off the dunes, and using designated beach access points.

Aside from the storm protection, habitat, and aesthetic values, this vegetation is also the key factor in determining where an oceanfront property owner can build or re-build on an oceanfront lot. The North Carolina Division of Coastal Management relies on the "first line of stable vegetation" from the ocean to determine the required setback for oceanfront structures. The more vegetation closer to the ocean, the more room to build and the greater chance that an oceanfront property owner will be allowed to rebuild in the event of a catastrophe.

The Town just recently completed the Eastern Phase Beach Nourishment Project, and the "first line of stable vegetation"

was determined by the NC Division of Coastal Management prior to nourishment and is now fixed in this area. (According to the rules, beach nourishment projects can not result in a seaward shift of the first line of stable vegetation, even if such vegetation occurs naturally.) The Western Phase Beach Nourishment Project is scheduled for the fall of 2004, and oceanfront property owners interested in maintaining a favorable setback line are encouraged to plant additional vegetation prior to the recording of the fixed line prior to construction of the Western Phase.

### **New Solid Waste Program Enjoys Relatively Smooth Implementation**

The Town's new solid waste program has been in place since Memorial Day weekend, and despite a few minor glitches, the implementation has been relatively smooth. The Town appreciates the cooperation of our residents, property owners, visitors, and rental agencies in making the new program successful.

Waste Industries (the Town's solid waste contractor) and Town staff have been hard at work collecting the remaining solid waste racks from the public right of way. (Many thanks to those who broke down their existing racks for easy collection and disposal!) This aspect of the implementation has been slower than desired, but the Town will complete the collection and disposal of the remaining racks as quickly as possible.

Residents, property owners, and visitors are reminded to make sure their roll-out containers are placed directly adjacent to the street in time for collection by Waste Industries. The area east of Black Skimmer Drive (including Archer's Point) is collected on Mondays and Thursdays (summer only), and containers should be placed adjacent to the street before early morning on the day of collection. The area west of Black Skimmer Drive is collected on Tuesdays and Fridays (summer only). Again, containers should be placed adjacent to the street before early morning on the day of collection.

### **Help Us Keep Mosquito Populations Down**

With the recent heavy rains that have deluged the island, every nook and cranny has become a catch pocket for water. Recent inspections by Town staff reveal many yards with items holding rain water, and these items become mosquito breeding grounds. In fact, the mosquito can breed in a tablespoon of standing water. Please make an effort to identify these items in your yard, and eliminate any items holding standing water.

**Inspections Tip – Attention Out of Town Owners, “Weekend Warriors”, and General Home Improvers!** The Planning and Inspections Department understands your desire and need to repair and or improve your properties. However this does not exempt you from obtaining a permit to do said work. The Planning and Inspections Department is open Monday through Friday, 8.00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and performs plan review every Tuesday and Thursday mornings. If you're planning a weekend of projects that involve structural repair or new construction you will need to provide the Planning and Inspections Department with a scale drawing and a description of the intended work to obtain a building permit. The base price for a permit is \$ 40.00. The intent of the NC Building Code is for protection of health and safety. Help us utilize this tool and provide for your protection.

### **Recent Staff Promotions**

Fire Captain Don Askew was recently promoted to the rank of Assistant Fire Chief by Fire Chief Bill Walker. Police Captain Bill Hargett was recently promoted to the rank of Assistant Police Chief by Police Chief Mark Wilson. Both promotions recognize many years of outstanding service by both individuals and reflect their status and contributions as the second-in-command in these essential public safety departments. Please join the Town in congratulating Assistant Chief Askew and Assistant Chief Hargett on their accomplishments.

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