

Emerald Tidings / Island Review – July 19 Print Edition

FY 06-07 Budget Adopted – General Fund Tax Rate Unchanged

The Board of Commissioners adopted the Town's FY 06-07 budget at their meeting on June 13. The budget maintains the current General Fund tax rate of 15.5 cents per \$100 of taxable value, making FY 06-07 the 4th year in a row without a General Fund tax rate increase.

The total FY 06-07 General Fund budget is \$6,420,916, a 2.36% increase over the FY 05-06 adopted budget amount. The General Fund budget includes sufficient funds to continue Town programs and services at current levels, and also includes funding for several beneficial projects and initiatives in FY 06-07. One new position is funded, a Parks Maintenance Worker, which will increase the Town's total full-time workforce to 61 employees. The new position will help the Town to adequately maintain our increasing number of park facilities, including the new bike paths and Emerald Isle Woods Park. The budget includes funding for major projects such as the construction of traffic improvements at the intersection of Coast Guard Road and NC 58, the paving of Crew Drive extension to secure a conservation easement along the "Gateway", and the completion of storm water pipe repairs in Cape Emerald. Also included in the FY 06-07 budget are several smaller projects, including the construction of a new sidewalk segment between Town Hall and Lee Street, the construction of sidewalk "stubs" at the Town's signalized intersections, the connection of the Doe Drive storm water pump to the new Coast Guard Road storm water system, the replacement of exercise equipment in the Community Center, and improvements to bathhouse facilities at the Eastern Ocean Regional Access, Blue Heron Park, and Merchants Park.

The total FY 06-07 budget for the Town's Beach Nourishment Debt Service / Reserve Fund, is \$2,491,374. This budget is sufficient to make scheduled debt service payments on the bonds issued by the Town to fund the construction of 2 locally funded beach nourishment projects in 2003 and 2005. The special district tax rates for oceanfront properties will remain at 48 cents and the rate for non-oceanfront properties will remain at 3 cents. These rates remain the same for the 5th year in a row.

The FY 06-07 budget also includes funding to replace soundside piers and access facilities damaged by Hurricane Ophelia. FEMA reimbursements will fund this work over the next several months. The FY 06-07 budget also includes funding for another beach nourishment project designed to replace sand lost during Hurricane Ophelia. The Town expects to receive FEMA reimbursements of approximately \$5,875,450 to complete this work this winter. The Town has also budgeted \$143,000 for the construction of new handicapped accessible beach access ramps and observation decks at the Eastern Ocean Regional Access and Western Ocean Regional Access in FY 06-07. This project will be funded primarily by grant funds awarded by the NC Division of Coastal Management

The FY 06-07 budget and 5-Year Capital Replacement / Improvement Program, also adopted by the Board on June 13, also envision the initiation of design work for two new Town facilities in FY 06-07. First, the Town expects to proceed with the design of a new EMS station to be located on the corner of NC 58 and Live Oak Street, adjacent to Fire Station #1. Design work will occur in FY 06-07, with construction tentatively planned for FY 07-08. The Town also expects to proceed with the design of an expanded and renovated Police Department and new Town Hall building in FY 06-07. Construction of these facilities is also tentatively planned for FY 07-08, with the Police

Department expanding into the current area occupied by Town Administration and the meeting room, and the construction of a new Town Hall at a new location at the Town Hall complex.

Emerald Isle Woods Park Set to Open July 21

The Town is nearing completion of the new Emerald Isle Woods Park, and has scheduled a grand opening celebration for Friday, July 21 at 10 am at the new park. The new park is located on the soundfront on Coast Guard Road, approximately ¼ mile west of NC 58. The public is invited to attend and enjoy refreshments and a tour.

This 43-acre nature park includes a new access road, a new parking area, a bathhouse and picnic shelter, several new trails, and a new pier and floating dock on Bogue Sound. The park represents the largest preserved tract of maritime forest in Emerald Isle, and includes beautiful views of Bogue Sound from a high ridge. The new trails wind through the forest, up and over naturally vegetated dunes, and around large wetland areas. The park land was originally acquired by the Town in 2002 for the Town's Coast Guard Road storm water system, and now serves a dual purpose.

The \$565,000 project was funded by a \$250,000 grant from the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and a \$315,000 appropriation by the Town.

Bogue Inlet and AIWW Crossing Dredging Underway

Work began in late June on two key dredging projects near Bogue Inlet, and should greatly improve the navigability of area waters.

First, the US Army Corps of Engineers sidecast dredge arrived to insure a safe and navigable connector channel from the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (AIWW) to the open ocean. This channel has been maintained by the Corps for many years, and work is typically done several times a year. The June arrival of the dredge was the first dredging event of 2006, and was sorely needed due to severe shoaling conditions in the connecting channel. As part of the dredging activity, the Corps and the Coast Guard have repositioned the buoys in the connecting channel to a more western location that requires less dredging. This dredging work should be complete by early July, and the Corps expects to return for additional dredging as needed later this summer.

Second, the Corps' contracted pipeline dredge arrived in late June and began work in the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway near Bogue Inlet. Depths in the AIWW had shoaled to as little as 1-2 feet in some areas where a depth of 12 feet is expected. Unlike the sidecast dredge, which casts dredged sand off to the side of the channel, the AIWW dredging involves the use of a pipeline and placement of dredged sand on the beach. The Corps' contractor is placing an estimated 77,000 cubic yards of sand dredged from the AIWW at The Point in front of the sandbags. The placement of this sand at The Point will augment the significant natural accretion that is occurring in that area.

Both of these dredging projects have been historically funded 100% by the Federal government. Due to Federal budget difficulties, there was not sufficient funding appropriated for either of these projects this year. Both projects were in jeopardy of not being completed, which would have resulted in unsafe boating conditions in the connecting channel and AIWW. Fortunately, the NC Division of Water Resources offered to partner with area local governments to provide the necessary funding to dredge these important waterways. The Town of Emerald Isle played a lead role in securing nearly \$500,000 from the State for this project, which was matched with

approximately \$300,000 from Onslow County, Carteret County, Emerald Isle, Swansboro, Cedar Point, Cape Carteret, Peletier, and Bogue. The cooperation exhibited by the State and all area local governments was critical to making these projects happen this year.

NC Coastal Resources Commission Set to Examine Oceanfront Setback Rules and Static Vegetation Line Issues

Under NC Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) regulations, any beach nourished with more than 50 cubic yards of sand per linear foot is subject to what is known as the “static vegetation line”. The “static vegetation line” is the first line of stable vegetation that existed immediately prior to construction of the beach nourishment project, and is used in perpetuity to determine CAMA setbacks.

The “static vegetation line” can move further landward if additional erosion occurs, but the line can not be moved further seaward if the beach nourishment project performs as intended and fosters the growth of new dunes and vegetation. The practical result of the application of this regulation is that any non-conforming oceanfront properties prior to a beach nourishment project will be non-conforming in perpetuity. Regardless of the position of the actual first line of stable vegetation, there is no opportunity for an existing structure to be rebuilt if affected by fire or storm damage greater than 50% of the value of the structure, and no opportunity for vacant oceanfront lots to be built upon in the future. In Emerald Isle, the area between the Indian Beach town line and Pier Pointe condominiums includes many non-conforming properties subject to the “static vegetation line”.

At its June 23 meeting in Greenville, the NC Coastal Resources Commission (CRC) discussed the possibility of amending CAMA regulations pertaining to the “static vegetation line”, and directed staff at the NC Division of Coastal Management to perform research, identify options, and report back to the CRC at a later meeting. The eventual outcome of this exercise is uncertain, however, there is the potential for a rule change that would allow the “static vegetation line” to be adjusted or removed in the future if the beach nourishment project has resulted in a stable beach after a defined period of time. The practical ramification for Emerald Isle is that such a rule change could enable the reconstruction of older oceanfront homes in the eastern part of Emerald Isle and/or allow new homes to be built on currently non-conforming vacant lots. The Emerald Isle Board of Commissioners discussed this issue earlier this year, and unanimously supports any efforts by the NC Coastal Resources Commission to remove the perpetual “static vegetation line”.

This issue will be debated by the CRC over the coming months, and interested citizens should monitor this process and become involved. The website for the NC Division of Coastal Management is <http://dcm2.enr.state.nc.us/> for more information on CRC meetings, current regulations, etc.

Don't Wait to Get Your Hurricane Re-Entry Permit!

Unfortunately, hurricane season is now upon us! Hopefully Emerald Isle will be spared this year, but if we are impacted by a hurricane you'll want to make sure you've got your Town-issued hurricane re-entry permit ready if needed.

The Town of Emerald Isle utilizes a hurricane re-entry permit system to assign priority for returning to the island if the Town is closed as a result of hurricane damage. The Town previously issued

permanent hurricane re-entry permits to all property owners in Emerald Isle, and these permits allow residents and property owners to return to the island earlier than the general public if the island is temporarily closed after a hurricane.

The Town's re-entry permits are permanent permits, and are intended to be transferred with the property. If you sell your property, the re-entry permit should be transferred to the new owner. If you are purchasing property, please make sure the permit is transferred to you at the closing. If you are a long-term renter, please contact your landlord for the re-entry permit for your rental unit. If you do not have a permit, a replacement permit can be obtained from Town Hall at a cost of \$25.00. Conclusive proof of property ownership or residency (for renters) is required in order to secure a replacement permit.

The Town urges all residents and property owners to make sure that you have the necessary re-entry permit *well in advance* of an approaching hurricane. Town staff are always extremely busy preparing for an approaching hurricane, and at some point it becomes necessary to stop the issuance of hurricane re-entry permits. Prior to previous hurricanes, there were numerous residents and property owners who waited until the last minute to secure re-entry permits, and these individuals were unable to secure a re-entry permit. Although recent storms did not result in a prolonged closure of the island, future storms may require the Town to temporarily close the island.

Please don't wait to get your re-entry permit! If you don't have a re-entry permit, please obtain one now at Town Hall! We're open from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday thru Friday.

Red Flags Mean No Swimming in the Ocean!

The Town utilizes a RED FLAG warning system to advise swimmers of particularly dangerous surf conditions, including a greater likelihood of dangerous rip currents. If conditions warrant, the Town's Beach Patrol will post large RED FLAGS near each of the public beach access locations in Emerald Isle. If the RED FLAGS are posted, no one should be swimming in the ocean. The Beach Patrol will remove the RED FLAGS when surf conditions return to normal.

Please heed these warnings at all times. The Town strives to prevent serious injury or death on our beaches, and wants everyone to have a safe and enjoyable visit to Emerald Isle. Failure to heed these warnings also places your family and friends, helpful bystanders, and the Town's personnel at risk if a rescue is necessary.

For more information about RED FLAGS, ocean safety, and rip currents, please contact the Emerald Isle Fire Department at 252-354-2445. Be safe!

Please Fill In Holes on the Beach!

The Town encourages everyone to enjoy their time on the beach, and we welcome you to dig holes, build sand castles, and play in the sand! For safety and environmental reasons, we ask that you please take the time to fill in any large holes that are dug on the beach. Large holes left on the beach can be a hazard for people walking on the beach at night, for Town vehicles patrolling the beach and cleaning up trash, and for sea turtles that nest on our beaches. Thanks for your cooperation!

