

Island Review / Emerald Tidings – July 20, 2005 Print Edition

FY 05-06 Town Budget Adopted – General Fund Tax Rate Decreases for 3rd Year in a Row!

The Board of Commissioners adopted the Town's FY 05-06 budget at its regular meeting on June 14. The FY 05-06 General Fund tax rate is 15.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value, which is a 1-cent, or 6% decrease from the FY 04-05 rate of 16.5 cents. This is the 3rd straight year that the General Fund tax rate has been reduced by 1 cent, and the FY 05-06 rate is believed to be the lowest in the history of Emerald Isle! These tax rate decreases have been possible due to increasing sales tax revenues associated with the Town's beach nourishment projects, significant new construction in Emerald Isle, the reduction of the Town's general debt levels, controlled expenditure growth, and focused planning for the Town's capital needs.

The FY 05-06 budget includes sufficient funds to continue Town programs and services at current levels, and also includes funding for several key projects and initiatives in FY 05-06. The budget includes funding for major projects such as the construction of Emerald Isle Woods Park, the paving of the Western Ocean Regional Access parking lot, and the construction of traffic improvements at the intersection of Coast Guard Road and NC 58. Also included in the FY 05-06 budget are several smaller projects, including the installation of air conditioning in the Community Center gymnasium, a comprehensive re-write of the Town's development ordinances, the construction of Phase II of the NC 58 bicycle path (from Merchants Park to Black Skimmer Drive), the construction of additional sidewalks along NC 58 (from Emerald Plantation to Coast Guard Road), improved handicapped facilities at the Town's regional beach accesses, repairs to the Town's drainage pipe in Cape Emerald subdivision, drainage improvements along Ocean Drive in the eastern areas of Town, the dredging of the canal on Bogue Sound Drive, repairs to the pier at Cedar Street Park, and the construction of a new pedestrian bridge over the canal on Holly Street, among others.

The FY 05-06 budget retains the 48-cent tax rate for properties in the Primary Benefit (oceanfront) special tax district and the 3-cent tax rate for properties in the Secondary Benefit (non-oceanfront) special tax district for the 4th year in a row. The revenues generated from these special district taxes are used to retire the General Obligation bonds approved by the Town's voters in 2002 and used to finance the Town's beach nourishment projects in 2003 and 2005. All other Town taxes and fees will remain unchanged with the adoption of the FY 05-06 budget, with the exception of the Town's annual solid waste fee. The solid waste fee is slated to increase slightly, from \$147 to \$150, a \$3, or 2.0% increase over the FY 04-05 fee.

The Board of Commissioners also adopted an updated Capital Replacement / Improvement Program that outlines the Town's planned major capital expenditures over the next 5 years. The adopted program includes the scheduled replacement of the Town's vehicles and other heavy equipment and also includes planned major projects. The adopted program includes the construction of Phase II of the Coast Guard Road Storm Water Project in FY 07-08, the construction of a new or renovated / expanded Police Station in FY 07-08, and additional sidewalk and bicycle path projects over each of the next 5 years, among other projects. Preliminary projections indicate that the Town should be able to complete these projects without significantly impacting the tax rate, and Town officials will work hard to complete these projects without impacting the tax rate when the annual budgets are adopted each year.

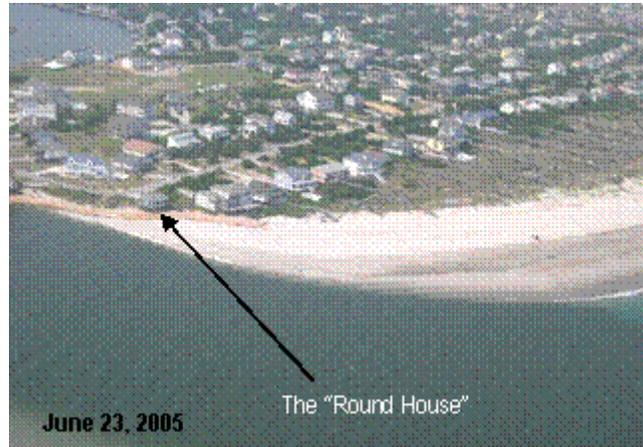
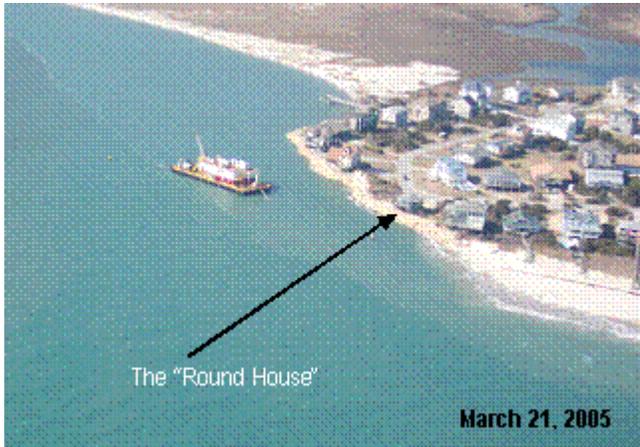
The Mayor, Board of Commissioners, Town Manager, and Town staff are all pleased with the FY 05-06 budget, and are especially pleased to limit the property tax burden on our residents and property owners.

Update – Bogue Inlet Channel Project

Nearly 3 months after completion, the Bogue Inlet Channel project appears to be functioning as intended. The newly constructed channel in the center of Bogue Inlet, located approximately 3,500 linear feet west of The Point, is the dominant channel in the inlet and is capturing the bulk of ebb tide flows through the inlet, thereby relieving erosion pressures on the homes and public infrastructure located at The Point. The new channel has been marked

by the US Coast Guard as the best navigable water through the inlet, and recent surveys indicate that the new channel depths range from -8.5 feet to -25 feet, with only a limited area shoaling to a depth of -8.5 feet. The US Army Corps of Engineers has historically maintained Bogue Inlet to a depth of -6 to -8 feet.

The Town's engineers predicted that the old channel would fill in naturally after the new channel was constructed, and that the historical spit at the western tip of Emerald Isle should return within 4 - 6 years. The Town is seeing early evidence of accretion along the sandbags at The Point, with an exposed beach at the base of the sandbags near the ocean in areas where the water was previously 10 - 15 feet deep. An underwater ledge is building along the base of the sandbags further upstream in the old channel, and the Town is encouraged by this development thus far. We obviously hope this trend will continue.



The newly constructed dike across the old channel has suffered some significant erosion, and is now only approximately 1,200 feet long. It was originally constructed to be approximately 2,200 feet long. Although the Town is concerned about the dike, and continues to monitor the erosion of the dike, the main concern is the stability and dominance of the new channel. The main goals of the project were 1) to relocate the main channel away from the homes and infrastructure at The Point, 2) to nourish 4+ miles of ocean beach, and 3) to promote the natural accretion of sand in front of the sandbags at The Point. The determination of project success should be made after considering each of the main goals, and the Town believes that each of these goals has been achieved. The construction of the dike, nor the overall stability of the dike was not a main goal of the project, and was added well after the project was conceived as a safeguard to promote the dominance of the new channel.

The Town is pleased to have completed the project, and continues to closely monitor the conditions in Bogue Inlet. The Town is also actively working to help secure Federal funding for future maintenance dredging of Bogue Inlet, which is in danger of not being funded in Federal fiscal year 2006.

If you have questions about the Bogue Inlet Project, please contact Town Manager Frank Rush at 252-354-3424 and he'll be happy to explain the project.

Respect the Town's Dog Ordinances – Especially on the Beach!

The Town's ordinances require dogs to be kept on a leash at all times, including on the beach strand. The Town also has a "pooper-scooper" law, and requires that all dog feces, including feces deposited on the beach strand, be collected by the owner and disposed of in an appropriate waste container. These ordinances are in place out of respect for others enjoying Emerald Isle, and to help the Town to maintain access to the beach for dogs. The Town's Beach Patrol and Police Department diligently enforce these ordinances, and violation will result in a \$50

civil citation.

Carteret County Awards \$15,000 to Town for Beach Accesses

The Carteret County Board of Commissioners recently approved a \$15,000 award to the Town of Emerald Isle to assist the Town in maintaining and improving its public beach access facilities. The Town has over 60 public access locations along its 12+ miles of ocean beach, 4 general parking areas with spaces for more than 500 vehicles, and several handicapped parking areas in Town. The Town greatly appreciates this assistance from the County Commissioners!

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!

Most Golf Carts on Public Roadways Are Illegal

Under NC law, most golf carts can NOT be legally operated on public roadways in Emerald Isle. Golf carts can be legally operated on private streets, such as those in Cape Emerald, Lands End, Spinnakers' Reach, and the other private communities in Emerald Isle, as these private streets are not subject to traffic law enforcement.

NC statutes allow "low speed vehicles" to operate on public roadways. In order to qualify as a "low speed vehicle", the vehicle must be registered with the NC Division of Motor Vehicles (i.e., have a license plate), be insured, meet certain safety standards, and must be equipped with headlamps, stop lamps, turn signals, tail lamps, parking brakes, rearview mirrors, windshields, windshield wipers, a speedometer, seat belts, and a VIN #. Newer golf carts and golf carts modified to meet these standards prior to August 2002 that are registered with the NC Division of Motor Vehicles are legal, and can travel on public roadways that have a speed limit of 35 mph or less. ALL other golf carts operating on public roadways are illegal, and the Emerald Isle Police Department will issue citations to offenders.

Emerald Isle residents, property owners, and visitors should note that this is a State law, and not a Town ordinance. The Town of Emerald Isle has no authority to pre-empt State law.