

Emerald Tidings / Island Review – July 21, 2004 Print Edition

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

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 the last storm, Hurricane Isabel, 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.

Most Golf Carts on Public Roadways Are Illegal

Town staff have received several inquiries recently about the use of golf carts in Emerald Isle. 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.

Emerald Isle Sea Turtle Protection Program Needs Volunteers

Emerald Isle is the site of numerous sea turtle nests each summer, and the first two nests of 2004 have been laid on Emerald Isle near 8th Street and the 8600 block. Emerald Isle historically averages approximately 15-20 nests annually, and more are expected as the summer progresses.

The Town is fortunate to have a dedicated group of volunteers who care for these nests and attempt to insure that the

maximum number of hatchlings survive the incubation period and reach the ocean waters later this fall. However, additional volunteers are needed as soon as possible to cover three zones along Emerald Isle's 12 miles of oceanfront beach –

- Zone 1 - 1st Street to 10th Street**
- Zone 2 - 10th Street to 18th Street**
- Zone 3 -18th Street to Eastern vehicle ramp.**

Volunteer duties include walking these areas between 6 am and 7 am daily looking for turtle tracks. Volunteers will walk the high tide line and look toward the dunes to see the tracks. Other volunteers will provide training for new volunteers and can offer additional assistance.

Please contact Emile Zucker at 252.354.9458 (or bzucker@ec.rr.com) or Pam Minnick at 252.354.4288 (or paminn@aol.com) to sign up or learn more. Additional information is also available at www.emeraldisle-nc.org/turtleupdates.htm.

Public Works Department Adds Inmate Labor Crew

The Public Works Department added a 3-person inmate labor crew to its work force in June. This inmate labor crew will assist with a wide range of duties including street repairs, litter removal, yard debris collection, right-of-way maintenance, and other duties. The inmate laborers are minimum security prisoners from Newport Correctional Center, and they will be under the close supervision of other Public Works employees. All Public Works employees have received supervisory training for the inmate labor crew.

The inmate labor program is essentially free labor (with only minimal related expenses), and the Town is pleased to be able to increase our manpower at minimal additional cost. The addition of this crew will enable the Public Works Department to maintain and improve our current level of service without additional burden on our taxpayers.

Town Employee Spotlight – Jessica Back, Town Hall Receptionist



Jessica is the first face you see when you enter Emerald Isle Town Hall. She is Emerald Isle's favorite receptionist and enjoys the many facets of her job. Greeting the public with a quick smile and helpful attitude, Jessica is able to assist residents, property owners, business owners, and visitors with their questions. Jessica has been in the position of Town Hall Receptionist since June, 2003. Prior to that, she worked as a Dispatcher in the Emerald Isle Police Department from 1999 - 2003.

Jessica was born in Odessa, Texas. Her family moved to Swansboro when she was 13, where she attended Swansboro High School. She currently lives in Emerald Isle, and loves the small-town feel here, where you always run into someone you know everywhere you go. Jessica is also a full-time student at Mount Olive College. She is a very active volunteer with the Girl Scouts of America, and also volunteers her time with many Parks & Recreation events, fishing tournaments, and the annual St. Patrick's' Day Road Race, just to name a few.

Jessica's advice to the public is "Don't hesitate to call if you have questions or need assistance. We're here to help

you”.

Fast Facts

- The Town of Emerald Isle has 59 full-time employees. The Police Department is the largest Town department, with 22 full-time positions. Only one new full-time position has been added to the Town organization in the past 3 years.
- The Town’s FY 04-05 General Fund property tax rate of 16.5 cents per \$100 of taxable value has been confirmed as the lowest tax rate since 1969, and is believed to be the lowest rate ever!
- The average property in Emerald Isle is valued at just over \$200,000 (based on the 2001 revaluation conducted by Carteret County), which means the average property tax payer’s annual property tax bill is approximately \$332, or less than \$28 per month. This amount is considerably less than the typical monthly cable television bill!
- The Town’s outstanding general debt at June 30, 2004 is only \$56,000. Total outstanding beach nourishment debt at June 30, 2004 is \$11,325,000. The Town’s total outstanding debt equates to less than 1% (0.81%) of the Town’s total taxable value, well below the legal threshold of 8% and the practical threshold of 2.5%.