

Town of Emerald Isle

Mayor
Arthur B. Schools, Jr.

Mayor Pro-Tem
Floyd Messer, Jr.

Board of Commissioners
Pete Allen
Nita Hedreen
John Wootten
Maripat Wright



Visit our web site at www.emeraldisle-nc.org!

Town Manager
Frank A. Rush, Jr.
frush@emeraldisle-nc.org

Mailing Address
Town of Emerald Isle
7500 Emerald Drive
Emerald Isle, NC 28594

Voice 252-354-3424
Fax 252-354-5068

Emerald Tidings / Island Review – August 16, 2006 Print Edition

WORKING HARD TO IMPROVE EMERALD ISLE FY 2005-2006 – THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The Town of Emerald Isle continued to move forward during FY 2005-2006, and saw the completion of several major projects and other initiatives intended to make Emerald Isle an even better place than it already is!

The Mayor, Board of Commissioners, Planning Board members, advisory committees, Town Manager, Town staff, and many concerned citizens continued to work hard to maintain and enhance the excellent quality of life that we all enjoy in Emerald Isle! We are proud of our community's collective accomplishments during the past year, and look forward to another prosperous and productive year in FY 2006-2007!

Highlights of the past fiscal year (July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006) included the following:

Town Initiates Efforts to Preserve The Pier

In April, a formal announcement was made indicating that Bogue Inlet Pier and approximately 15 acres of surrounding properties are under contract to be sold to a private real estate development firm. The property remains under contract at this time while the prospective new owners research and analyze development issues and options. The closing for the sale of these properties is anticipated in the next several months.

The Town's leadership became aware of the possibility that the Pier could be sold early in early 2006, and immediately began efforts to preserve the pier at that time. By the time the formal announcement was made in April 2006, the Town had laid the initial groundwork for a partnership with the NC Aquariums and a forthcoming NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) grant application. The April 2006 formal announcement kicked the Town's efforts into high gear, and led to the creation of www.saveourpier.com by Mayor Art Schools and other interested residents in May 2006. At about the same time, the Town announced its potential partnership with the NC Aquariums and formally submitted an \$8 million Clean Water Management Trust Fund grant application on June 1, 2006.

The Town's leadership continues to work very hard on efforts to preserve the pier, and the Mayor and Commissioners have identified this issue as a top priority. The Town is currently awaiting a decision on the CWMTF grant application later this fall, and if successful would use grant funds to remove existing storm water outfalls in the vicinity of Bogue Inlet Pier, acquire the pier, and acquire sufficient parking for pier patrons and beach visitors. The Town's intention is to eventually convey the pier to the NC Aquariums, who would ultimately operate the pier as a satellite facility of the Pine Knoll Shores Aquarium. The Town is working closely with the prospective new owners of the pier on this issue, and maintains a cooperative relationship.

While much work remains to be done to insure the perpetual existence of a public fishing pier in Emerald Isle, the Town remains committed to this issue and is optimistic about its chances for success. The pier issue will continue to dominate the Town's agenda in FY 06-07.

Emerald Isle Woods Park Completed

The Town's newest park, Emerald Isle Woods, located on a 43-acre soundfront parcel just west of the Cameron Langston Bridge, was completed in June 2006 and was formally dedicated and opened to the public in July. Design work began in June 2005, and a construction contract was awarded in October 2005. Park designer JKF Architecture, contractor Blue Rock Structures, and Town staff all worked diligently during the fiscal year to complete the park by the June 2006 grant deadline.

The new park includes a new access road and parking area, a new bathhouse, elevated boardwalks, a new pier to Bogue Sound, and lengthy nature trails through the largest undeveloped parcel remaining in Emerald Isle. The park features beautiful views of Bogue Sound and dense areas of maritime forest for the enjoyment of our residents, property owners, and visitors. The total cost of the new park was approximately \$565,000, of which \$250,000 was provided by a grant from the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

Town Secures "Gateway" Conservation Easement

After several months of negotiations, the Town secured a formal agreement to acquire a conservation easement along the eastern side of the Emerald Isle "Gateway" area in June 2006. The "Gateway" area is the natural area between the Cameron Langston bridge and Coast Guard Road at the main entrance to Emerald Isle, and its preservation was a key goal indicated in the Town's Land Use Plan.

The acquisition of the conservation easement insures that the 30 ft. strip adjacent to the NC 58 right of way will not be disturbed; all existing topography and vegetation will be protected in a natural state. In order to secure the "Gateway" conservation easement, the Town agreed to pave the unimproved portion of Crew Drive in this area at an estimated cost of \$130,000. Funding for this work is included in the Town's FY 06-07 budget.

Phase II of NC 58 Bicycle Path Completed

An additional .6 mile of new, 10 ft. wide asphalt bicycle path was completed along the south side of NC 58 in June 2006. This new stretch runs from the terminus of the 1.4 mile, Phase I path at Merchants Park east to Black Skimmer Drive. The new path results in a continuous 2 mile dedicated path for bicyclists, walkers, and runners along the busiest section of NC 58 through the center of town, and provides a safe means of alternative transportation to Town businesses and a safe exercise area for our residents, property owners, and visitors. The completion of the Phase II path now enables bicyclists, walkers, and runners to travel all the way from the 3000 block to The Point without ever having to travel on NC 58.

The total cost of this project was approximately \$180,000, and was funded primarily with a \$140,000 grant from the NC Department of Transportation. The new path was designed by Municipal Engineering and constructed by David Johnson Construction Company, with key contributions from Town staff. The Town is pleased to be able to provide the new bicycle paths, and looks forward to offering additional paths in the future.

More New Sidewalks

The Town installed additional 6 ft. wide concrete sidewalks along the north side of NC 58 between Emerald Landing subdivision and Coast Guard Road in December 2005. The construction of this segment completed an overall 2 mile route from Coast Guard Road and the Town Hall complex that has been constructed in various phases over the past 3 years. The new sidewalk on the north side of NC 58 also provides a safe means of alternative transportation to Town businesses and a safe exercise area. The Town has future plans to add more sidewalks as funds become available.

Emerald Isle Survives Hurricane Ophelia

Hurricane Ophelia made an unwanted visit to Emerald Isle in September 2005, causing damage and headaches for our residents, property owners, visitors, and businesses. The storm resulted in significant damage on the soundfront in Emerald Isle, as the position of the storm track and the duration of the storm combined to cause major flooding in low-lying areas along the sound. The oceanfront areas weathered Ophelia surprisingly well, as the Town's recent beach nourishment projects prevented ocean overwash and significant damage on the oceanfront. The ocean beach did experience moderate erosion, resulting in the loss of approximately 570,000 cubic yards of sand from our beach. Typical storm water problems occurred in neighborhoods along Coast Guard Road, and Town staff worked hard with these neighborhoods to mitigate problems. The Town's new pumps installed in Deer Horn Dunes and Sea Dunes performed exceptionally well, with storm water runoff pumped to the Emerald Isle Woods site. The Point area

weathered the storm well, which did not impact the natural accretion underway in that area. Ophelia did cause the re-opening of the Coast Guard channel near The Point, but this re-opening has not negatively impacted the accretion at The Point.

Town staff coordinated emergency preparedness and response activities for Ophelia and maintained continuity of emergency services throughout and after the storm. Town staff coordinated public information efforts and debris clearing efforts during and after the storm, and was able to collect all vegetative and most construction debris by late October. All debris cleanup expenses have been reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the NC Division of Emergency Management (NCEM). The replacement of the Town's soundside piers damaged by Ophelia is currently underway and will be reimbursed. FEMA and NCEM will also finance the replacement of the eroded sand from the ocean beach, providing nearly \$6 million to nourish the beach this coming winter.

Town Leads Area Efforts to Dredge Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway and Bogue Inlet Connecting Channel

Unfortunately, the Town and other area local governments learned in late 2005 that the FY 05-06 Federal budget did not include funding for important maintenance dredging of area waterways that have historically been maintained by the Federal government. With key assistance from the NC Division of Water Resources, the Town of Emerald Isle led two initiatives to secure State and local funding to complete this dredging work in 2006.

These efforts ultimately were successful, and the dredging work was completed in June and July 2006. First, the Town's efforts led to a State contribution of \$285,000 matched with \$95,000 from area local governments (\$15,000 from Emerald Isle) to provide for annual maintenance dredging in the Bogue Inlet connecting channel. Second, these efforts also led to a State contribution of \$207,000 matched with nearly \$200,000 from area local governments (\$45,000 from Emerald Isle) to dredge the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway.

Without this financing plan, this work would not have been completed in 2006, resulting in dangerous and perhaps impassable conditions for area boaters and commercial vessels. The Town's leadership recognizes the value and importance of maintaining the navigability of our waterways, and will be working to restore Federal funding for these activities in FY 06-07 and beyond.

Western Ocean Regional Access Parking Lot Improvements Completed

The Town completed major parking lot improvements at the Western Ocean Regional Access, located off Islander Drive near the Cameron Langston Bridge, in May 2006. With the assistance of a \$120,000 grant from the NC Division of Coastal Management, the Town paved the gravel parking area and installed new storm water management features. The result is a more aesthetically pleasing, better organized parking layout that infiltrates storm water runoff.

The project was designed by Municipal Engineering and constructed by Onslow Paving, with important contributions by Town staff. The new parking lot includes more than 160 clearly identified parking spaces, and features an attractive landscaping scheme with rows of new palm trees.

New Solid Waste Contract Awarded

After several months of discussion about desired improvements to the Town's solid waste system and a competitive proposal process, the Board of Commissioners authorized a new 5-year solid waste contract in June 2006. The new contract is effective January 1, 2007, and will be implemented by Simmons & Simmons Management, Inc. of Clinton, NC. The Town received 3 proposals from solid waste firms, and Simmons & Simmons offered the Town the most attractive and cost-effective proposal.

The new service provided by Simmons & Simmons will include twice per week curbside garbage collection year-round. All properties on the south side (ocean side) of NC 58 and Coast Guard Road, including The Point, will have garbage collected every Monday and Thursday. All properties on the north side (sound side) of NC 58 and Coast Guard Road will have garbage collected on Tuesday and Friday. The entire Town's recyclables will be collected each Wednesday from the curbside. This new schedule will enable the Town to collect all garbage from oceanfront areas in Town immediately after the weekend has ended. An added feature is that Simmons & Simmons personnel will roll-back the garbage and recycling containers to the house (or a point 30 feet back from the street right-of-way) after emptying the container. It will remain the property owner's responsibility to place the container at the curbside.

Simmons & Simmons presented the most economical proposal to the Town for these services, and the Town is pleased to enter into the contract with Simmons & Simmons. The overall cost to our property owners will increase slightly from the current \$150 per year to \$170 per year, however, on a monthly basis this fee (equivalent to \$14.16 per month) remains very competitive with other communities and private sector services.

4th Year in a Row With No Increase in General Fund Property Tax Rate

The Board of Commissioners adopted the FY 06-07 General Fund budget in June 2006, and maintained the General Fund property tax rate at 15.5 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation. This marks the 4th year in a row without a tax rate increase. The Town's budget has remained stable over the past 4 years as a result of strong construction activity, steady increases in sales tax collections, careful expenditure controls, and strategic budget planning.

Emphasis on Land Use Planning Continues

Town staff, the Planning Board, and the Board of Commissioners continued its emphasis on land use planning during the past year, with several key land use decisions designed to maintain the "small town atmosphere" and high quality of life that exists in Emerald Isle. Key actions over the past year included:

- the rezoning of most RMH properties to R-2, thus removing the potential for motels, hotels, and multi-family units to be constructed in areas consisting primarily of single-family and duplex structures,
- the initiation of efforts to rezone existing condominium complexes from RMH to RMF, removing the potential for the redevelopment of these complexes as motels or hotels in residential areas,
- the rezoning of two large commercially zoned tracts to residential zoning (R-2), resulting in the platting of these tracts for new single-family subdivisions (Sea Oats and Sunset Landing),
- the creation of the Marine Commercial land use designation in the Town's Land Use Plan, and application of this designation to the Island Harbor Marina in an effort to promote the perpetual existence of a public marina in Emerald Isle,
- the hiring of a seasoned land use planning consultant to oversee the comprehensive re-write of the Town's outdated development ordinances into a more user-friendly document that is consistent with the Town's Land Use Plan, and
- the initiation of efforts to develop an enhanced community vision and new zoning regulations for the Village East (Bogue Inlet Drive area) and Village West (Islander Drive area) areas that are ripe for redevelopment.

Town staff, the Planning Board, and Board of Commissioners remain committed to achieving the vision outlined in the Town's Land Use Plan. With the recent land use planning actions cited above, more than 85% of the Town is zoned for single-family homes and duplexes only, which is clearly consistent with the community's overall desire to maintain a "small-town atmosphere".

Other Notable Accomplishments / Items of Note from FY 05-06

- Through the hard work of all Town employees, particularly the Fire Department and the Town's Safety Committee, the Town of Emerald Isle became the first local government employer in North Carolina to receive the Municipal Star Award. The Municipal Star recognizes employers who are proactive and make employee safety a top priority.
- The Town was awarded a \$107,000 grant from the NC Division of Coastal Management to construct two new handicapped accessible beach ramps and observation areas at the Western Ocean Regional Access and Eastern Ocean Regional Access. The Town will provide a \$36,000 match and construct these facilities in FY 06-07.
- Post-project monitoring efforts associated with the Bogue Inlet channel relocation project began in November 2005. The project continues to perform as intended, with the new channel remaining dominant in the center of the inlet complex and maintaining consistent depths of 10-20 feet throughout the new channel. Significant natural accretion has occurred at The Point, with more than 400 feet of new beach formed since the end of the project. Additional sand dredged from AIWW was placed at The Point in July 2006, further bolstering the area.
- Work continued on the design of traffic improvements at the intersection of Coast Guard Road and NC 58. The Board of Commissioners endorsed a plan to add additional turn lanes and lengthen existing turn lanes in an effort to improve stacking of vehicles at the traffic signal and improve traffic flow. Construction of the project has been pushed back to FY 06-07, with a January 2007 target date for construction (in the off-season when traffic impacts will be minimized).

- The Town forged a strong relationship with Emerald Isle Emergency Medical Services, Inc. with the creation of a new Joint EMS Committee consisting of Town commissioners and EMS representatives. The Joint EMS Committee, the Town, and EI EMS are all working toward the construction of a new EMS station to be located on Town-owned property at the corner of Live Oak Street and NC 58. Construction could begin later in FY 06-07.
- The Board of Commissioners identified the need for a new Police Station as a top priority for funding over the next few years. The Town will be working in FY 06-07 to finalize a plan to expand the Police Department's space and modernize the station.
- Acting Police Chief Bill Hargett was formally appointed Chief of Police in August 2005. Chief Hargett is a 27-year veteran of the Emerald Isle Police Department.
- The Police Department purchased an AFIS LiveScan electronic fingerprinting system in September 2005. The new equipment enhances the Police Department's ability to identify criminals, distribute information to other law enforcement agencies, and register child identification information.
- The Town implemented a new Pay Plan and Personnel Policy in January 2006 to provide for fair, equitable, and competitive compensation for the Town's valuable employees.
- The Town completed the dredging of the canal adjacent to Bogue Sound Drive in March 2006. The project removed approximately 4,600 cubic yards of sediment from the canal to deepen it to -4 ft. at low water. The project was funded primarily by a State grant and assessments of adjacent property owners.
- The 2006 Emerald Isle St. Patrick's Festival was held in March, and continues to be the Town's signature special event. The 2006 festival is believed to be the most attended festival ever!
- The 2nd Annual Emerald Isle Holiday Parade was held in November 2005, with even greater attendance than the 1st parade in 2004.
- Town staff in the Parks and Recreation Department and Public Works Department continued efforts to improve the Town's soundside access points through the construction of new bulkheads at several soundside street ends in the eastern part of town.
- The Town's 3rd Street Park was improved with a new parking area and improved storm water system.
- Commissioners John Wootten and Pete Allen were re-elected in November 2005, along with newcomer Maripat Wright. Mayor Art Schools was re-elected for his 3rd term.

Last, But Not Least.....

The various Town departments continued to provide the high quality, responsive, and courteous daily services that our residents, property owners, and visitors deserve in Emerald Isle. These daily services that are sometimes taken for granted include emergency response, public education, police patrol, garbage collection, park maintenance, recreation programs, street maintenance, building inspections, beach access maintenance, general administration and many others. Although there is always room for improvement, the Town is fortunate to maintain a quality staff of committed people.

All of us at the Town of Emerald Isle are proud of the Town's accomplishments over the past year, and we look forward to an even more productive year ahead! You can stay in touch with what's happening in Emerald Isle by reading Emerald Tidings in the Island Review, signing up for our email newsletter at our website, or by visiting www.emeraldisle-nc.org for all the latest information about the Town's activities.