

Town of Emerald Isle

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Mayor Pro-Tem
Floyd Messer, Jr.

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MAKING EMERALD ISLE EVEN BETTER! FY 2004-2005 – THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The Town of Emerald Isle continued to move forward during FY 2004-2005, 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 2005-2006!

Highlights of the past fiscal year (July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2005) included the following:

Bogue Inlet Channel Relocated, Western Oceanfront Beaches Nourished - Finally!

After more than 3 ½ years of focused efforts (and additional efforts prior to that time), the Town finally completed the relocation of the main channel in Bogue Inlet and the nourishment of 4.5 miles of the western oceanfront beaches in April 2005.

The project's main goals were: 1) to relieve erosion pressure from the old channel on the homes and infrastructure at The Point by relocating the main channel; 2) to provide for beach nourishment in the western area of Town (as approved by the Town's voters in a 2002 bond referendum); and 3) to promote the natural accretion of sand in the old channel and adjacent to the homes and infrastructure at The Point over the next 4 - 6 years. The project entailed the dredging of a new main navigation channel through the center of the Bogue Inlet complex (approximately 3,500 ft west of the old channel), the placement of more than 700,000 cubic yards of high-quality sand along the beach from Pinta Drive west to Lands End, and the construction of a sand dike across the old channel.

The Town is pleased to have finally constructed the project, and believes that two of the project's main goals have clearly been accomplished (relocation of main channel, beach nourishment component) and that the third goal, natural accretion at The Point, is progressing as predicted. As noted above, the Town's engineers predicted that the old channel would fill-in naturally over the next 4 - 6 years, thereby re-creating the historical spit that existed at The Point. Steady natural accretion has already occurred since April 2005, and the Town is encouraged thus far. The majority of the constructed sand dike has been eroded, and the

sand used for the dike remains in the inlet complex. While the erosion of the dike is a concern, the Town remains focused on measuring the project against the three main goals stated earlier.

The total project cost, including all environmental documentation, design, construction, and post-project monitoring is approximately \$11.4 million. The Town, through a combination of bond proceeds and special district tax revenues, financed \$7.6 million of this cost, and was fortunate to receive a \$3.8 million grant from the NC Division of Water Resources for the project.

Phase I of Coast Guard Road Storm Water Project Completed, Working Great!

FY 2004-2005 also saw the completion of another long-sought major Town project. Phase I of the Coast Guard Road Storm Water Project was completed in June 2005 after several years of hard work, permitting uncertainties, and changing strategies. Phase I involved the construction of new drainage improvements on Fawn Drive, the construction of a new retention pond on Deer Horn Drive and the installation of a submersible pump, the installation of a submersible pump on Conch Court, and improvements at the Emerald Isle Woods site that receives the storm water pumped from Deer Horn and Conch.

The total construction cost of Phase I was approximately \$500,000, and follows the 2002 purchase of the Emerald Isle Woods receiving site for \$3.3 million (of which \$2.4 million was funded by a NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund grant). Although the new improvements have not yet been tested by a major storm event, the new system is functioning extremely well during and after moderate and heavy rainfall events. The Town is pleased to offer relief to the residents and property owners in the affected areas, and looks forward to the construction of future phases of the project.

Grant Submitted for Phase II of Coast Guard Road Storm Water Project

Phase II of the Coast Guard Road Storm Water Project involves the installation of two new pumps in Lands End, a new pump at Island Circle, associated piping, and additional improvements to the Emerald Isle Woods receiving site. The Town submitted a \$1.25 million grant application to FEMA and the NC Division of Emergency Management in FY 2004-2005, and is optimistic about securing grant funding. The NC Division of Emergency Management has approved the grant request, and the Town is awaiting final word from FEMA, expected sometime in FY 2005-2006.

Design of Emerald Isle Woods Park Gets Underway

The Town initiated design work for the new Emerald Isle Woods Park (also the site of the storm water project receiving area) in May 2005, and hired a team led by JFK Architecture of Greenville, NC to design and oversee construction of the park later in 2005 and 2006. The new park is expected to cost approximately \$500,000, and is partially funded with a \$250,000 grant from the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. The new park is expected to be complete by June 2006, and will include walking trails, parking areas, picnic areas, a bathhouse, and a new public pier to Bogue Sound.

Bike Path Completed, Experiencing Heavy Usage

Phase I of the NC 58 Bicycle Path project, the Town's first separate and dedicated bike path, was completed in March 2005. The new path is 1.4 miles long and 10 ft. wide, and runs along the south side of the NC 58 right-of-way from Coast Guard Road east to Merchants Park. Total project cost was approximately \$170,000, with approximately \$104,000 funded through a grant from the NC Department of Transportation. The new path has been very well-received by the community, and has experienced heavy usage since its completion. The Town has plans for additional bike paths, with Phase II (along NC 58 from Merchants Park east to Black Skimmer Drive) planned for construction in the fall / winter of 2005 / 2006.

More Sidewalks Added

Building on previous sidewalk construction efforts, FY 2004-2005 saw the construction of an additional 3,500 linear ft of new sidewalk along the north side of the NC 58 right-of-way from the Eagles Store (near Merchants Park) east to Emerald Plantation Shopping Center. A portion of the additional sidewalk was

funded by a \$20,000 grant from NCDOT, and other portions were constructed at very low cost by inmate labor crews from Carteret Correctional Facility in Newport. The Town intends to construct additional sidewalk segments in FY 2005-2006, with a goal of extending the existing sidewalk from Emerald Plantation east to Coast Guard Road prior to summer 2006.

Town Implementing 2004 CAMA Land Use Plan Recommendations

The Town's 2004 CAMA Land Use Plan was officially certified by the NC Coastal Resources Commission in October 2004, and the Town has been hard at work over the past year to implement the Plan's recommendations. The majority of RMH-zoned properties (which allow single-family, duplex, condominiums, and motels) in Town were rezoned to R-2 (allows single-family and duplex; no condominiums, motels) over the past year, reflecting the goal to retain the "small-town atmosphere" identified in the Plan. Preliminary work began on the implementation of the new Village East (main commercial area) and Village West (Islander Drive) areas, with more detailed work scheduled for FY 2005-2006. The Village East and Village West concepts include the development of a more "downtown feel" with pedestrian amenities in these areas of Town, including a mixture of commercial and residential uses.

New Fire Truck in Service

The Town took delivery of a new 1,250 gallon per minute Fire pumper truck in February 2005, significantly boosting the Fire Department's fire suppression capabilities. The new, state-of-the-art truck has several new features to enhance our capabilities, including scene lighting, both Class A and B foam, and the newest technology available for monitoring the pumping operations to keep our firefighters safe. The new truck cost approximately \$350,000, and this cost was initially funded with new debt that has since been retired early.

Town Strengthens Relationship with Emerald Isle EMS

In March 2005, the Town strengthened its relationship with the non-profit Emerald Isle Emergency Medical Services squad by inking a new 5-year contract. The new contract was drafted by a new standing Joint EMS Committee consisting of representatives from the Town and EI EMS. EI EMS operates at the paramedic level of care (the highest emergency level care available) through a combination of dedicated volunteers and part-time paid personnel overseen by an autonomous Board of Directors. The Town's payment to Emerald Isle EMS is approximately \$200,000 per year, which is considered to be a significant bargain for Emerald Isle's taxpayers.

Mayor's Term Extended to 4-Years

After a lengthy process designed to maximize public input, the Board of Commissioners increased the term of the Mayor from 2-years to 4-years, beginning with the winner of the November 2005 Mayor's election. The increase in the length of the Mayor's term now results in the Mayor and 4 of the 5 Commissioners serving 4-year staggered terms, with the 5th Commissioner serving a 2-year term.

Deal Finalized for Land for Future Soundside Park near Chapel-By-The-Sea

Through the generosity of the W.B. McLean heirs, and after a complex negotiation, an 8-acre tract of soundside property on the east side of Chapel-By-The-Sea (near mile marker 18) was donated to the newly-formed, non-profit Emerald Isle Parks and Recreation Association, Inc. for use as a future soundside park. The EI Parks and Recreation Association's Board of Directors, appointed by the Town, is currently working on a vision for a future park and will be working to secure funding for desired park amenities.

Beach Driving Regulations Amended

After considerable community debate, the Board of Commissioners amended the Town's beach driving regulations in August and September 2004. The new regulations extended the beach driving season by adding the last 2 weeks of September and most of April (except Easter week), eliminated fees for people over age 65, and included additional provisions to protect turtle nests when necessary.

Another Tax Rate Decrease – FY 2005-06 General Fund Tax Rate is Lowest Ever!

The Board of Commissioners adopted the FY 2005-2006 budget in June 2005, and for the 3rd year in a row the General Fund tax rate decreased by 1-cent. The FY 2005-2006 General Fund tax rate is 15.5 cents (down from 18.5 cents in FY 2002-2003), and this rate is believed to be the lowest rate in the history of Emerald Isle. This rate ranks among the lowest of NC's 21 oceanfront municipalities. Significant growth in sales tax revenues, continued new construction, careful expenditure controls, reduction of outstanding debt levels, and careful planning for capital needs have all contributed to the Town's ability to keep the tax rate low. The Town continually strives to provide services in the most cost-effective manner and seek new grant funding opportunities.

Town's Bond Ratings Upgraded, Maintains Strong Financial Position

The Town received an affirmation of its financial management practices in November 2004 when both major New York-based bond rating agencies upgraded the Town's ratings. Moody's Investors Service assigned a one-step upgrade from an A3 rating to an A2, and Standard & Poor's assigned a two-step upgrade from an A- to an A+. Moody's and Standard & Poor's cited the Town's continuing desirability as a tourism and retirement destination, growth in the property tax base, low debt levels, consistently strong overall financial position, and sound financial management practices as the main factors contributing to the ratings upgrades.

The Town continues to enjoy an excellent financial position, with a total available General Fund balance of over \$2.1 million, or nearly 35% of annual General Fund expenditures. With the adoption of the FY 2005-2006 budget, the Town now has no outstanding debt other than the voter-approved beach nourishment bonds that are being retired primarily with special district tax revenues earmarked solely for beach nourishment.

Another Record Year for New Construction

FY 2004-2005 was yet another record year for new construction in Emerald Isle, with nearly \$38.4 million of activity. This represents a slight increase over the FY 2003-2004 mark of \$37.0 million, and is nearly double the historical average of \$20 million annually in the late 1990s / early 2000s. The overwhelming majority of this new construction is in the form of new single-family homes, with very little multi-family or commercial construction occurring over the past year.

Other Notable Accomplishments

- The Board of Commissioners adopted a new ordinance clarifying that new billboards are prohibited in Emerald Isle outright. There had previously been some uncertainty in the Town's ordinance regarding new billboards.
- Following much citizen input, and in an effort to work cooperatively with our military neighbors, the Board approved the establishment of the Bogue Field AICUZ overlay district. Owners selling properties within the AICUZ district (generally in the middle of Town between the Cameron Langston Bridge and Archer's Point) are encouraged to disclose the presence of Bogue Field, and other mechanisms are in place to achieve disclosure for newly developed properties.
- The Emerald Isle Business Association, with assistance from the Town and dedicated volunteers, organized the 1st Annual Emerald Isle Holiday Parade held over Thanksgiving weekend. Turnout for the parade was outstanding, both in terms of parade floats and spectators. Mark your calendars for the 2006 event!
- The Emerald Isle Business Association, with assistance from the Town, organized the 1st Annual Emerald Isle Triathlon that was held in September 2004. The event was a big success, with over 150 participants. The 2005 event is scheduled for October 15.

- The Town was awarded a \$120,000 grant, to be matched with \$40,000 from the Town, to pave the parking lot and construct storm water management features at the Western Ocean Regional Access. This work was originally scheduled for spring 2005, but has been delayed until fall / winter 2005 / 2006.
- The Town constructed 6-ft wide asphalt bike path connectors in the “breaks” in Ocean Drive near East Summer Place, Periwinkle Drive, and Coquina Drive in order to provide a continuous asphalt surface for bicyclists, runners, and walkers.
- The Town constructed a new pedestrian bridge over the canal / creek at Loblolly Street. The new bridge provides easier beach access for residents and property owners on the soundside in this area. Another pedestrian bridge is planned for Holly Street in FY 2005-2006.
- The Town increased the weekend services provided by the Public Works Department in an effort to keep the beach strand cleaner and address other maintenance issues on the weekends.
- The Town’s Dunes and Vegetation Ordinance was amended to allow for greater flexibility in removing trees on already-developed properties.
- The Town worked cooperatively with the local vacation rental agencies to limit the placement of vacation rental signs to 1 sign per structure, and to allow the signs on the structure only (not allowed in front yard near the roads).
- The Board gave preliminary direction to Town staff to proceed with plans to construct a new / expanded / renovated Police Station in the near future. Town staff are conducting additional research, and the Town’s Capital Improvements Program calls for construction in FY 2007-2008.
- The Public Works Department secured the continuing assignment of a 3-man inmate labor crew from Carteret Correctional Facility to assist the department’s manpower. The inmate labor crew is provided at minimal cost to the Town, and has enhanced the Public Works Department’s responsiveness. Another crew has been requested to aid the Parks and Recreation Department.
- The Police Department purchased and implemented the new “GEM Car” to better patrol commercial areas, beach accesses, the Pier area, and neighborhoods, and to promote more contact between officers and the public.
- The Fire Department implemented a new “Red Flag” warning system in summer 2004, and continues to use the warning system to advise swimmers of dangerous surf conditions and rip current threats. Swimming is not advised when the red flags are flying on the Town’s various public beach access walkways.
- The Town continued providing input into the US Army Corps of Engineers’ Feasibility Study for the 50-Year Shore Protection Project. The Town is seeking this primarily Federal and State-funded project in order to complete future beach nourishment projects at the lowest possible cost for our residents and property owners. The Feasibility Study is expected to be complete in mid / late 2006, with initial construction not anticipated earlier than 2009.

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.

