

ISLAND REVIEW

November 21, 2002 Issue

Beach Nourishment Project Set to Begin

Construction on the Eastern Phase of the Emerald Isle Beach Nourishment Project will begin in late November or early December. A contract has been executed with Weeks Marine, Inc. for the 1.81 million cubic yard, 5.8 mile nourishment project that will cover the area between the Indian Beach town line and Santa Maria Drive (in the 6800 block).

Weeks Marine will utilize both hopper dredge and cutterhead dredge technology to complete the project. A cutterhead dredge will arrive in Emerald Isle in late November or early December, and will pump sand for a 2-3 week period. Assuming favorable weather conditions, we expect Weeks Marine to complete the first 400,000 cubic yards, or nearly the first mile of the nourishment project before Christmas (working from east to west). According to the current schedule, the cutterhead dredge will leave before Christmas, and a hopper dredge will arrive in early January and work continuously until the end of March to finish the entire Eastern Phase project.

The dredging schedule is subject to change due to weather conditions, mechanical conditions, and permit conditions, however, the schedule outlined above is an accurate projection at this time. The Town will be posting periodic progress reports about the nourishment project, with photos and maps, on the Town's web site once the project is initiated. Please visit www.emeraldisle-nc.org to remain informed about the status of the project.

Bogue Inlet Scoping Meeting Held

The US Army Corps of Engineers recently conducted the official scoping meeting for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Bogue Inlet Channel Relocation Project. The meeting was held on Tuesday, October 29 at White Oak Elementary School, and represents the formal initiation of the EIS process for the Bogue Inlet project. More than 50 interested citizens and regulatory agency representatives helped identify issues that should be addressed in the EIS. Many relevant issues were identified; among them were impacts to Bear Island (Hammocks Beach State Park) and Dudley Island (in the sound), potential loss and/or addition of bird habitat, impacts on fisheries habitat, future stabilization of the channel, loss of private homes and infrastructure at the Point, sand compatibility for beach nourishment, and the need for additional public access near the inlet, as well as many others.

The EIS is currently being prepared by Coastal Planning & Engineering, and we are hopeful that it will be completed by the fall of 2003 so that permits can be issued and dredging can be completed by March 31, 2004. This schedule is very ambitious, and there is some possibility that the project could be delayed until the winter of 2004-2005. The Town will be working closely, however, with the US Army Corps of Engineers and other regulatory agencies to attempt to meet the winter 2003-2004 schedule.

Town Implements OSHA's SHARP Program to Promote Workplace Safety and Reduce Costs

Back in the mid-nineties, the Town affirmed its commitment to provide a safe work environment for its employees, its most valuable asset, and the Town's Safety Committee was established. The Town's Safety Committee has been in place ever since, and has continued its work to insure a safe working environment for its employees.

The Safety Committee has worked closely with OSHA over the years. The Town participates in OSHA's voluntary inspection program, which works proactively to identify unsafe conditions and enables the Town to avoid potentially costly fines. The standard fine by OSHA is \$7,000 per violation, so this approach helps to eliminate unsafe conditions and save the Town money. In addition to working with OSHA, the Safety Committee has been working to provide annual safety and health training, walk-through inspections of our workplace, establishing safety policies, and policing each other for safety violations.

Because the Town has made such significant strides in workplace safety, OSHA has encouraged the Town to participate in its SHARP (Safety & Health Achievement Recognition Program) program. SHARP employers receive a certificate of recognition and an exemption from programmed compliance inspections, and this is renewable for consecutive years. The Town eventually hopes to participate in OSHA's Carolina Star Program, which is the highest status it can achieve.

The Town's Safety Committee has worked very hard through the years, and their work is appreciated. The Safety Committee is made up of one person from each department representing a wide array on the town's chain of command. They are: Gayle Parker – Administration, Jimmy Taylor – Inspections, Artie Dunn – Public Works, Mitch Schellinder – Police Department, Dean Griffin – Fire Department (chairman), Mark Penry – Parks and Recreation, and Bill Walker – Fire Chief / Safety Director.

Septic Tank Health

Emerald Isle does not own or operate a centralized wastewater collection and treatment system, and the vast majority of structures in Town utilize individual septic systems. When septic systems are designed, constructed, and maintained properly, they are an effective method of disposing of and treating household wastewater in coastal North Carolina. However, poorly maintained systems can result in negative impacts, such as groundwater contamination, public health problems, shellfish closures, and expensive repairs and property damage.

Some tips for keeping your septic tank health include the following:

- Inspect and pump your septic tank every 3 to 5 years.
- Protect your drainfield by not parking or driving on it, so the healthy vegetation can absorb nutrients from the soil.
- Reduce the amount of solids added to your wastewater; the more you add, the higher risk of failure.

Signs of septic system failure can be found inside and outside the home. Signs outside your home could be wet spots or standing water, odd growth patterns – including dead areas surrounded by green growth, and septic odor – which is easy to detect. Inside the home, slow drains and backups could indicate septic system failures. Keep in mind that leaky fixtures and garbage disposals also can be symptoms of possible septic tank failures.

For more information about septic tank health, please contact the Carteret County Environmental Health Division at 252-728-8499 or the NC National Estuarine Research Reserve at 252-728-2170.

FY 2001-2002 Financial Audit Completed

Bell and Company CPAs, the Town's auditor, recently completed the FY 2001-2002 annual audit. The Town is happy to report that it received a clean audit report, and that the Town maintains an excellent financial position. Some of the highlights from the recent audit include:

- General Fund revenues in FY 2001-2002 totaled \$4,758,742. General Fund expenditures totaled \$4,844,392, and exceeded revenue collections. This resulted from the planned use of General Fund balance in the FY 2001-2002 budget to cover expenditures.
- Property taxes accounted for \$2,359,887, or approximately 50%, of total General Fund revenues. Local option sales taxes accounted for \$717,888, or approximately 15%, of total General Fund revenues. Solid waste user fees were also a significant General Fund revenue source, netting \$730,206, which is also approximately 15% of total General Fund revenues.
- Public Safety expenditures (Police and Fire) were \$1,944,312 in FY 2001-2002, or approximately 40% of all Town expenditures.
- The Town's undesignated General Fund balance at June 30, 2002 is \$1,380,266. This amount represents approximately 26.5% of General Fund expenditures included in the FY 2002-2003 budget recently adopted by the Board. This is a healthy fund balance level, however, the Board and staff have expressed a desire to increase General Fund balance in future years. It is important for the Town to maintain a healthy fund balance in order to fund emergency expenditures (such as hurricane recovery), maximize investment earnings, maintain financial flexibility, and maintain a strong bond rating.
- The Town boasts a 99.41% collection rate for property taxes. This collection rate is outstanding, and is among the highest of all local governments in North Carolina. Thank you to our taxpayers for your timely payment of your taxes.
- As of June 30, the Town has a total of \$10,952,931 of recorded fixed assets. These assets include land, buildings, and equipment. This figure increased significantly over the past year due to the recent purchase of a 40 acre tract of land on Coast Guard Road for a future storm water / park facility.

Long-Serving Public Works Director to Retire

Bob Conrad, the Town's Public Works Director, recently announced his retirement, effective January 1, 2003. Bob has served the Town well for nearly 20 years, and has worked hard to provide essential town services with limited resources. Bob and his wife Vivian plan to continue to reside in Emerald Isle, and all of us at the Town wish them the best in the future!