

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

Town Approves Long-Term Contract with Emerald Isle EMS, Inc.

The Board of Commissioners approved a new 5-year contract with Emerald Isle Emergency Medical Services, Inc. (EI EMS) at its March 8 regular meeting. The new contract solidifies the Town's relationship with EI EMS, a predominantly volunteer squad providing emergency medical services to the residents, property owners, and visitors to Emerald Isle. EI EMS provides paramedic level care, the highest level of emergency medical care available.

The new contract establishes annual compensation in an amount equal to or greater than \$165,000, with the exact amount determined during the annual budget process. The cost for comparable emergency medical services in other communities with full-time EMS personnel is estimated at more than \$350,000 annually. The Town is fortunate to have EI EMS providing such high level services at a relatively low cost, and EI EMS is able to accomplish this due to the strong commitment of its dedicated volunteers.

A key component of the new contract is the establishment of a special Joint EMS Committee, consisting of 3 representatives each from EI EMS and the Town, to maintain active communication between the Town and EI EMS. The Joint EMS Committee will meet periodically to discuss key issues, and its roles will include making an annual EMS budget recommendation to the Board of Commissioners, planning for future EMS capital needs, and engaging in strategic planning for emergency medical services in Emerald Isle.

The Town is pleased to enter into this new contract with EI EMS, and looks forward to a productive and cooperative relationship that results in the best possible emergency medical care for our residents, property owners, and visitors.

Town Receives Another Sidewalk Grant

The Town has been awarded another grant from the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to construct additional sidewalks along NC 58. The Town will utilize \$20,000 from NCDOT and \$10,000 from General Fund reserves to construct 2,000 linear ft of new sidewalk from Mangrove Drive (CVS Pharmacy) west to Emerald Plantation Shopping Center on the north side of NC 58. This new sidewalk will connect to the existing sidewalk that runs from Mangrove Drive east to the Town Hall complex.

The Town hopes to complete this new sidewalk segment prior to the prime summer season. The new segment will be constructed by a private contractor, as opposed to utilizing inmate labor as has been done on several occasions in recent months. The Town recently received notice that inmate labor will not be available as frequently as in the past, and took action to seek out additional NCDOT grant funds to continue its aggressive sidewalk construction efforts. The Town plans to continue to utilize inmate labor for additional segments as crews become available, and will be seeking inmate labor assistance to eventually extend the sidewalk further west to the Coast Guard Road intersection.

2005 Street Resurfacing To Occur in April / May

The Town has contracted with the Coastal Carolina Division of APAC-Atlantic to resurface approximately 2.3 miles of Town streets during April and May. The Town's total street network includes approximately 46 miles of public streets, and the Town's goal is to resurface 2.3 miles, or 1/20th of all public streets annually. This schedule assumes a 20 year life cycle for all resurfaced streets.

The 2005 street resurfacing contract includes the following street segments:

- East Summer Place

- West Summer Place
- Ocean Drive – East Summer Place to West Summer Place
- Ocean Drive – Periwinkle Drive to Coquina Drive
- Ocean Drive – Santa Maria Drive to Arthur Drive
- Ocean Drive – Purdie Drive to Seagull Road
- Ocean Drive – Live Oak Street to dead-end
- Black Skimmer Drive
- Seagull Road
- Sandpiper Lane
- Cedar Street – Forest Drive to Ocean Drive
- Loblolly Street – Emerald Drive to canal dead-end.

The 2005 street resurfacing contract also includes the paving of the Cedar Street right of way at Cedar Street Park to improve the existing parking area. The contract also includes the paving of three 6-ft wide bicycle path connectors between various gaps in Ocean Drive. The 3 bicycle path connectors are located between East Summer Place and West Landing Drive, between Ebb Tide Drive and Periwinkle Drive, and between Santa Maria Drive and Coquina Drive. The completion of these bicycle path connectors will result in a continuous, smooth bicycling and walking surface along a 4-mile stretch of Ocean Drive from Holly Street to the “dog-leg” in the 3000 block.

FY 05-06 Recommended Budget to Be Presented on May 10

The Town Manager and Town staff are busy working on the annual recommended budget for presentation to the Mayor and Board of Commissioners at their regular meeting scheduled for May 10. Preliminary budget projections indicate that the Town should be able to continue current services, programs, and projects without a tax rate increase, and the Town is thoroughly investigating ways to reduce the General Fund tax rate.

The Town strives to provide the best possible services, programs, and projects in the most cost-effective manner to limit the tax burden on our residents and property owners. The Town has been able to reduce the General Fund tax rate by 1 cent over each of the past two fiscal years due to strong growth in other revenue sources and fiscal discipline. The Town’s 16.5 cent General Fund tax rate is the 5th lowest General Fund tax rate among the 21 North Carolina oceanfront towns. Other NC oceanfront town tax rates range from 9 cents to 46.5 cents.

Bogue Sound Drive Canal to Be Dredged

The Town has been awarded a \$96,000 grant from the NC Division of Water Resources to dredge approximately 2,800 linear feet of the canal adjacent to Bogue Sound Drive. The Town will provide a \$24,000 local match for the grant with funds collected from property owners fronting on the canal. The canal, which is currently 1-2 ft deep at low water will be dredged to a depth of 4 ft during the fall of 2005.

Town Investigating Police Station Renovation / Expansion vs. Replacement

The Town recently reviewed the results of a study completed by Burnette Architecture & Planning, PA, of Morehead City that assessed the space needs of the Emerald Isle Police Department. The current Police Station is more than 30 years old, and includes approximately 2,300 sq. ft. of space for 17 full-time sworn law enforcement officers and 5 communications personnel. The study recommends an expanded or new facility with approximately 4,500 sq. ft. to more adequately meet today’s Police Department needs, and recommends an expanded or new facility with approximately 6,700 sq. ft. to meet the Police Department’s projected needs over the next 10-15 years.

Town staff will be working over the next fiscal year to identify and analyze options for renovating and expanding the existing Police Station, constructing a new Police Station at the Town Hall complex, purchasing an existing building in

Town to house the Police Department, or constructing a new Police Station at a new location. The Town hopes to include a financing plan in the Town's 5-Year Capital Replacement / Improvement Program that is updated annually, and begin earmarking necessary funds so that construction can occur sometime within the next five years.

Emerald Isle Police Sergeant Mitch Schelinder Recognized by Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Police Sergeant Mitch Schelinder was recently recognized by the Carteret County Chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) for his efforts to remove drunk drivers from our roadways. Sergeant Schelinder recorded 25 DWI arrests, the 3rd highest total for a single officer in Carteret County in 2004. The entire Emerald Isle Police Department recorded 117 DWI arrests in 2004, maintaining its aggressive enforcement against DWI offenders.