

THE CURRENT

Your guide to current news & events from the Town of Oak Island, NC

February 2022

IN THIS ISSUE: Welcome / Monthly Review / Contributions / News & Notices / Coming Events / Department Feature / Photo Review

Welcome to February

WELCOME to the **FEBRUARY 2022** edition of **THE CURRENT**. "Love is in the air!" Whether February is truly the season for romance, or that's just the smell of Brunswick marsh at low tide, might depend on one's own personal perspective! Other than the burgers and brats of 'Bowl day, or the sugary sweets of Valentine's Day, February doesn't usually get much love from coastal communities. As we've said before, to many it comes across as just one last delay before the warm greenery of spring. As with so many other things, however, Oak Island proves just a little bit different.

We've got festivals, parades, Town infrastructure projects, Citizens Academies ... and a whole host of other "goings on" to keep even the most hermit-ed-winter-hermit engaged! Even with the occasional snow-dusted dunes, there's still a lot to love, from a Town that gives a lot of love back. So, if your plans are to seize the day, or "sleep it off till spring" we've got you covered. Crack open your heart-shaped candy box and put on your floaties, as we turn from the river of love into the **FEBRUARY 2022** edition of **THE CURRENT**.

MONTHLY REVIEW



MONTHLY REVIEW

REMINDER: Information on all news items can be found on the Town
Website at: www.OakIslandNC.gov/NEWS.

Council Recap

The Town Council's regular meeting on **January 11, 2022** began with three public hearings: **(I)** proposed amendments to Sec. 8.14.9 of the Unified Development Ordinance to allow sheds in the front yard of ICW lots upon certain conditions was returned to staff and the Planning Board so the applicant could provide additional information. **(II)** A proposed amendment to the Unified Development Ordinance to add a definition for "transparency" was adopted as presented. **(III)** After receiving public comments on proposed amendments to "Establishment of Vested Rights," Council scheduled a second Public Hearing for the proposed amendments for the February 8 Council meeting.

PRESENTATIONS: Council received a presentation on a new service contract from Norma Yanez and Buddy Smith of GFL Environmental, Inc. GFL is the Town's contracted service provider for garbage and recycling collection. Yanez explained the new agreement presented is for three years, with very similar terms as in previous years. There are some price increases for garbage collection, while also passing along cost savings for recycling processing.

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS: The Council unanimously appointed Wayne Brookover to the Recreation Advisory Board.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS: Town Manager David Kelly introduced Council to the new Stormwater Administrator, Rick Patterson; reporting additional work being done to mitigate minor flooding in the Ocean Drive area. Fire Chief Chris Anselmo reported that a used, 100' platform ladder truck had been located just outside of Chicago, IL. The truck is a 2009 with 58,000 miles (18 years newer than the one it is replacing), and has a life expectancy in Oak Island of an additional 15 years. Town's purchase offer of \$375,000 was accepted for the truck, which is currently being prepared and outfitted with town markings, with delivery expected sometime in February or March.

Manager Kelly went on to report that new, electric lights had been ordered for the Pickleball courts. The previously purchased solar powered lights had proved insufficient for the fast paced nature of the sport. Lights should be installed throughout the months of February and March, and the current solar lights will be repurposed in other park grounds. Finally, Kelly reported that "environmental concerns" had been added as a condition of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) grant funds, which would allow the Town to use the total \$2.4M received from the grant for sand projects.

OLD BUSINESS: **(I)** Council directed staff to schedule two (2) public meetings to discuss beach nourishment projects and funding. **(II)** Council approved a contract with engineering firm Moffatt & Nichol, for the 2022 Annual Beach and Jay Bird Shoals Borrow Area Monitoring Surveys. **(III)** Council took no action on *Phase II* of the engineering services contract with Moffat & Nichol for the Beach Management Plan, and will discuss at a future meeting.

NEW BUSINESS: **(I)** Council approved the request to begin direct billing of non-resident recipients of fire services. **(II)** Council adopted an ordinance amendment to the Town's Code of Ordinance, Chapter 28: Traffic. **(III)** Council approved the business license for *OKI Paddle Company, LLC*. **(IV)** Council approved the contract with GFL for Garbage & Recycling Collection Services. **(V)** Council adopted the NC 211-East Greenway Feasibility Report.

To view the video, agenda, or minutes from this or any Town Council meeting, just visit the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/MEETINGS, or click the link below.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)





Field Trips & Group Focus

Members of the Town Council, and the Council as a whole, had several non-regular engagements for the month of January.

ANNUAL RETREAT: On Wednesday, January 19, the Council held their annual Council Retreat at [801 Ocean Event Center](#), located in the Pier Complex at 801 Ocean Drive. Despite its name, the retreat serves as an annual workshop, to give council and management staff a full day to discuss upcoming priorities, projects, and financial goals for the Town's coming fiscal year. In addition to these goals, the Council also approved the purchase of new [Town Parking Decals](#) for the 2022 - 2024 years, and approved an amendment to the Fee Schedule to accommodate increases in solid waste collection costs. The Retreat can be seen in full on the Town YouTube channel at [www.OakIslandNC.gov/YOUTUBE](#).

TOPSAIL BEACH TRIP: On Tuesday, January 25, Mayor Liz White and Councilmembers Bill Craft and Mark Martin joined Town Manager David Kelly on a site visit to the Town of Topsail Beach, NC (*pictured*). They were joined at Topsail Beach by Wes MacCloud, Local Government Services Director with the Cape Fear Council of Governments, who had previously assisted Oak Island during the vacancy of the Planning & Zoning Administrator position. The purpose of the site visit was to learn from, and provide direct interaction with, other towns who are tackling similar challenges of beach management. Mayor White later reported the trip to be very beneficial; and although Topsail Beach was not an exact mirror to Oak Island, it still provided valuable insights into current best practices.

BEACH NOURISHMENT MEETING: On Monday, January 31 the Town Council held a special called meeting, for the purpose of discussing beach nourishment project planning, funding, and enforcement of regulations. For more information on this see **[Beach Management Plan: Called Meeting](#)** under the **NEWS & NOTICES** section below.

New Location, Same Great Service

During their October 12, 2021 regular meeting, the Town Council approved two major changes for the way Oak Island presents itself to the world. In addition to adopting a new official Town Logo, Council also took steps to modernize the Town's online presence, by approving the transition to a government verified "dotgov" (.gov) website domain. Having a .gov domain is important to local governments, as it provides visitors with assurances that they are using a legitimate government website.

As of the last week in January 2022, all efforts to transition the Town Website had been completed, and it was officially moved to www.OakIslandNC.gov.

While it may not be given much thought from the casual internet user, domain information is important when navigating the World Wide Web. It provides critical information on the type of site visited; and in the case of a .gov domain, gives assurances that the website you are using is a verified government organization.

There's no special effort needed to utilize the Town's new address, just swap out the old ".com" for the new ".gov" at the end. Not to worry if it takes a while to catch on either, as the old "www.OakIslandNC.com" domain will be retained by the Town, and still redirects to the new .gov site. All shortcut links within the new site work just the same as well.





Town of
Oak Is
Kevin Be

January
Public In

Skatepark Strategy Sessions

On Thursday, January 20, 2022 from 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM in the Town Council Chambers, the Recreation Department hosted the first Public Input Meeting for the Kevin Bell Skatepark Redesign Project.

The meeting featured a presentation and concept design walkthrough from Brad Siedlecki, President of Pillar Design Studios / Pillar Skateparks.

Following a 45-minute presentation, Siedlecki took questions from attendees on what certain details of the new park would look like. The meeting featured heavy interaction between the crowd and designer, in an attempt to truly understand what features the community wants and needs for the new skatepark.

Overall the meeting provided positive returns for all involved, with the only disappointment of the night being the timeline given. With the unfortunate delays in construction due to COVID response, as well as labor and materials shortages, a start time for building the new park isn't projected until after Labor Day 2022. Despite the delays however, Siedlecki remained optimistic that a new park could be completed by the end of the calendar year.

The Kevin Bell Skatepark has been a landmark in the Town of Oak Island for more than 20 years. Following its complete destruction from Hurricane Isaias in August of 2020, a strong community support has risen to see the park rebuilt in an even bigger and better fashion. The Rebuild Project maintains a dedicated page on the Town Website, which provides information on public input meetings, design concepts, and eventually construction progress updates. To view this page, simply visit: www.OakIslandNC.gov/SKATE or click the link below.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

Parking Decals Available Soon

As reported earlier in ***Field Trips & Group Focus***, the Town Council, at their annual retreat in late January approved the purchase of new Town Parking Decals. The new decals were ordered the following week, and expected to arrive by the second week in February. The decals will be GREEN (replacing the previous purple) and be valid for all of 2022 - 2024.

[PLEASE NOTE: This article, as well as the Town Website will be updated once decals have arrived and are available for purchase.]

For new residents, or those unfamiliar with the Town Parking Decals, the program provides users with access to dedicated parking at Beach Access Locations and other specifically marked areas. These reserved spaces are often regarded as a highly useful benefit during the busier months of the year! Town Parking Decals cost just \$10 per vehicle, with a limit of three (3) decals issued per parcel owned.

With over 65 public beach accesses, containing more than 1,000 parking spaces, the Town of Oak Island offers more beach accessibility than almost any other island in the Carolinas! (*HINT: To view all of the Town's Beach Access Locations, visit www.OakIslandNC.gov/ACCESS*). To learn more about the Town Parking Decal program, and receive the latest updates on when they become available, just visit the Parking Information page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/PARKING or click the link below.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

FOR ASSISTANCE WITH:

- PARKING DECALS
- WATER & TAX BILLS

HEAD RIGHT

FOR ASSISTANCE WITH
OTHER REQUESTS
EFT

CONTRIBUTIONS



CONTRIBUTIONS

Each month, between the *MONTHLY REVIEW* and upcoming *NEWS & NOTICES* sections, you'll find **CONTRIBUTIONS**. This section features content contributed from various Town Departments and staff, as well as the Town's municipal and non-profit partner organizations. Regular contributing partner organizations include the [Beach Preservation Society](#), the [Friends of Parks Foundation](#), the [Sea Turtle Protection Program](#), the [Southport-Oak Island Chambers of Commerce](#), and [Oak Island Water Rescue](#). For more information on the content presented in this section, please reach out to the contributing department or organization directly.



Safety Brief

*(Contributed by the **Oak Island Fire Department / Timothy Fleckinger**)* With winter still firmly in season (and sending reminders every weekend!) The Oak Island Fire Department would like to offer some important suggestions for added heating safety.

Space heaters, fire places, and other means of supplemental home heating are a great and economical way to help stay warm during the cold winter months. As with any heat source however, they must be used cautiously. When not given the proper respect and safety they can scald, burn, or destroy personal property. In the most severe of cases, they can even lead to fatalities. The Oak Island Fire Department would like to remind you of the following best practices:

1. Have the device or fireplace inspected annually to ensure they are operating optimally.
2. Never leave fires, space heaters, candles or other means of heat unattended.
3. Keep combustibles, and kids, 3-5 feet away from heat sources as these generate enough heat to burn, melt or ignite such items.
4. Be sure to verify that you use the right fuel for the right device.
5. Place heaters on a solid flat surface to prevent from tipping. Most newer models can detect a tilt and safely disable the device, but it's always better to err on the side of caution!
6. Supplemental heaters pull a lot of power so plug them directly into the outlet on the wall and NOT an extension cord.

Finally, some great advice that's worth following all year long, is to regularly make sure your smoke detectors are functioning, and have fresh batteries. A "best practice" would be a simple test once a month, or at a minimum of twice a year. Adjusting clocks for daylight savings time can usually serve as a good reminder.

For more fire safety tips, or to learn about the many ways the Fire Department works to keep you safe, just visit their page on the Town Website at www.OaklIslandNC.gov/FD or click the link below.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

Friends Of Parks Foundation

(Contributed by Dennis Maneri) On Friday, January 28, the Oak Island Friends of Parks Foundation held their first ever **Celebration Event** at the 801 Ocean Event Center. An idea of Board member Steve Watkins, the event thanks all those who have helped the Foundation through volunteer hours, donations, and in all the things big and small, to improve and enhance our parks; and reach our goal of improving the experience of everyone who uses them.

In spite of the cold, rainy weather, nearly 50 people attended to help celebrate the previous year, and to kick off 2022 as we announced our schedule. In addition to adding more benches, the Foundation (through the help of the Town's Public Works Department) will be installing shade sails this year at Middleton Park and has set another goal of replacing the Educational Trail signs at the Nature Center.

We established our charter and by-laws in late 2018, getting approval from the Federal Government as a non-profit, public charity. Our first year of operation was 2019 and we were just starting to "take off" when COVID hit and slowed us down.

In 2021, we started to emerge from COVID and saw some considerable contributions come to light. We cut the ribbon on the permanent shade structure next to the Splash Pad, and more recently saw the installation of benches at the PickleBall courts and at Veterans Park, where the first of several memorialized benches was installed.

Our biggest fundraisers last year were the two Pickle-ball Tournaments; one in the Spring and one in the Fall. Those games drew players from every state on the east coast from Maine to Florida. As with everything we're doing, we're accomplishing things through volunteer work, and dedicated work is what makes the Pickle-ball tournaments happen.

To learn more about the Friends of Parks Foundation, just visit their website at www.okifriendsofparks.org or click the link below.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)





Water Rescue Fundraiser

(Contributed by **Oak Island Water Rescue / Chief Tony Young**) On Saturday, March 5, 2022, Oak Island Water Rescue (OIWR) will be holding their Annual Food Drive to support the **Southport, Oak Island Interchurch Fellowship Food Pantry**. Donations will be taken from 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM at the Water Rescue Station on SE 49th Street.

Accepted donations will include non-perishable food items and monetary contributions, which will go directly to the food bank.

This is OIWR's third year holding the food drive. With the enormous support from Lowe's foods, the 2021 drive (*pictured*) proved enormously successful, having received 4-1/2 pick-up truck loads of non-perishable food during our effort. This food was donated to the SOIICF Food Pantry in Boiling Spring Lakes.

The Food Pantry was excited and thankful for your donations. They truly know just how beneficial this will be to our community.

To learn more about Oak Island Water Rescue, and the benefit they provide to our community, just visit their website at www.oিwr.org or click the link below.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

Smart Yards Program

*(Contributed by **Environmental Advisory Committee Member, Pam Johnson / Planning & Zoning Administrator, Mark Bloomer**)*

Do you have a Smart Yard sign in your yard? (*pictured*) If you don't you need one. Smart Yards are good for the entire island since they help to prevent flooding and storm water runoff.

There are four main things that you can do to make your yard a Smart Yard: rain gardens, rain barrels, rerouting downspouts and beneficial plantings.

A rain garden is a small, lower area of your yard that captures rain during storms (like a bowl), preventing it from rushing toward open waters. A rain barrel is a container that collects and stores rainwater from your roof.

Rerouting downspouts to areas where water can soak into the ground helps the environment. Having buffer zones around the boundary of your yard acts as a filter between polluted storm water and our natural waterways. Using beneficial plantings such as hardy, native plants and trees will give you a beautiful habitat, with minimum work and expense.

There is obviously more to Smart Yards than this. If you have a Smart Yard let us know. You may be able to get a Smart Yard sign put in your yard, and your yard may be featured in an upcoming issue of The Current.

More information on Smart Yards can be found on the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/SMARTYARD or by clicking the link below.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)



Smart Yard

NEWS & NOTICES



NEWS & NOTICES: FEBRUARY

Council & Board Meetings

REMINDER: All televised public meetings listed below will be broadcast live on OKI-TV (Spectrum Cable channel 8), as well as livestreamed on the Town Website. Meeting agendas, minutes, and any livestream or on-demand video available can be found on the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/MEETINGS.

TOWN COUNCIL (*televised*) will hold a **special called** meeting on **Monday, February 21, 2022** at **6:00 PM** in the Council Chambers, located on the second floor of Town Hall at 4601 E Oak Island Drive. **NOTE:** This will be the second in a series of two meetings called, for the purpose of discussing beach nourishment project planning, funding, and enforcement of regulations.

PLANNING BOARD (*televised*) will hold a regular meeting on **Thursday, February 17, 2022** at **10:30 AM** in the Council Chambers, located on the second floor of Town Hall at 4601 E Oak Island Drive.

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (non-televised) will hold a regular meeting on **Thursday, February 17, 2022** at **8:30 AM** in the Police Department Training Room, located on the second floor of the Police Department adjoining Town Hall at 4621 E Oak Island Drive.

CLOSURES & HOLIDAYS

GOOD FRIDAY: Administrative Offices for the Town of Oak Island will be **CLOSED** on **Friday, April 15, 2022** in observance of **Good Friday**.

Police, fire, and other emergency services are not affected during any holiday closure, and are always available by **calling 9-1-1**. The **Oak Island Pier** will be open during their seasonal hours. All currently available parks and public Beach & Water Access locations and facilities will be open as usual.

REMINDER: the full *Holiday Calendar* can be found on the Town Website at: www.OakIslandNC.gov/HOLIDAY.

Beach Nourishment Update: Phase II

Moving throughout the month of February, the **Phase II: Hurricane Florence** project will begin active on-beach operations to build new berm/dune structures and beach areas along the west end of the Island. The project will pick up just before Middleton Ave. where the **Phase I: Hurricane Matthew Nourishment Project** (also previously referred to as the 2020/2021 Nourishment Project) left off in May of 2021.

As of the first week in February, the Beach Access Location for **51st Place West** has been **CLOSED**, to allow for installation and staging of equipment for the Phase II Nourishment Project. This closure may take up to 4 weeks. Dredging and sand placement operations are expected to begin on February 17, starting around 6th Pl E where the Phase I project left off, and head west to service areas along W Beach Drive. The entire project is scheduled to wrap up in early April, just before the start of Sea Turtle Nesting season in May.

Once operations are underway, daily progress updates will be provided on the **Current Beach Nourishment Projects** page of the Town Website. To view this page, simply visit www.OakIslandNC.gov/SAND or click the link below.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)





Town of Oak Island Council Meeting

Beach Management Plan: Called Meeting

As reported earlier in ***Field Trips & Group Focus***, on Monday, January 31 the Town Council held a special called meeting for the purpose of discussing beach nourishment project planning, funding, and enforcement of regulations.

The meeting lasted a little over an hour and a half, and presented both the Council and public with the latest information on [Current Beach Nourishment](#) projects, as well as developments in the ongoing long-term [Beach Management Plan](#).

In addition to providing information, the meeting also served as a public input session, for the Council to receive feedback from interested residents. The entire meeting can be viewed on the [Meetings Information](#) page of the Town Website, under the Town Council Special Meetings section at www.OakIslandNC.gov/MEETINGS.

PLEASE NOTE: The January 31 meeting is the first in a series to **TWO (2)** meetings planned for this topic. The second meeting has been scheduled for **Monday, February 21, 2022 at 6:00 PM** in the Council Chambers, located on the second floor of Town Hall at 4601 E Oak Island Drive. As with the first meeting, this will also be for the purpose of discussing beach nourishment project planning, funding, and enforcement of regulations. This meeting will be televised LIVE on OKI-TV (Spectrum Cable channels 8 / 122), and livestreamed on the [MEETINGS](#) page of the Town Website linked above. A Virtual option for public input is not available; and all public speaking must be in-person, or submitted via writing to the [Town Clerk](#) at least 12 hours prior to the start of the meeting.

For more information on this called meeting, just contact the Town Clerk, via the Contact Form of the Clerk's page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/CLERK or click the link below.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

57th Place West: Rebuild Project

Along with the many Beach & Water Access Locations, there are also more than half a dozen locations for launching kayaks and small crafts. However, there are only two full boat launches within the Town limits. Since the destruction of its floating dock during Hurricane Isaias, the amenities offered at the boat ramp at 57th PL W have been sorely missed.

While the restaurant and other amenities surrounding the boat ramp are privately owned, the ramp itself is a street end, and maintained by the Town. It has been on the list of infrastructure projects to be repaired for some time, awaiting a host of permitting approvals and contractor coordination.

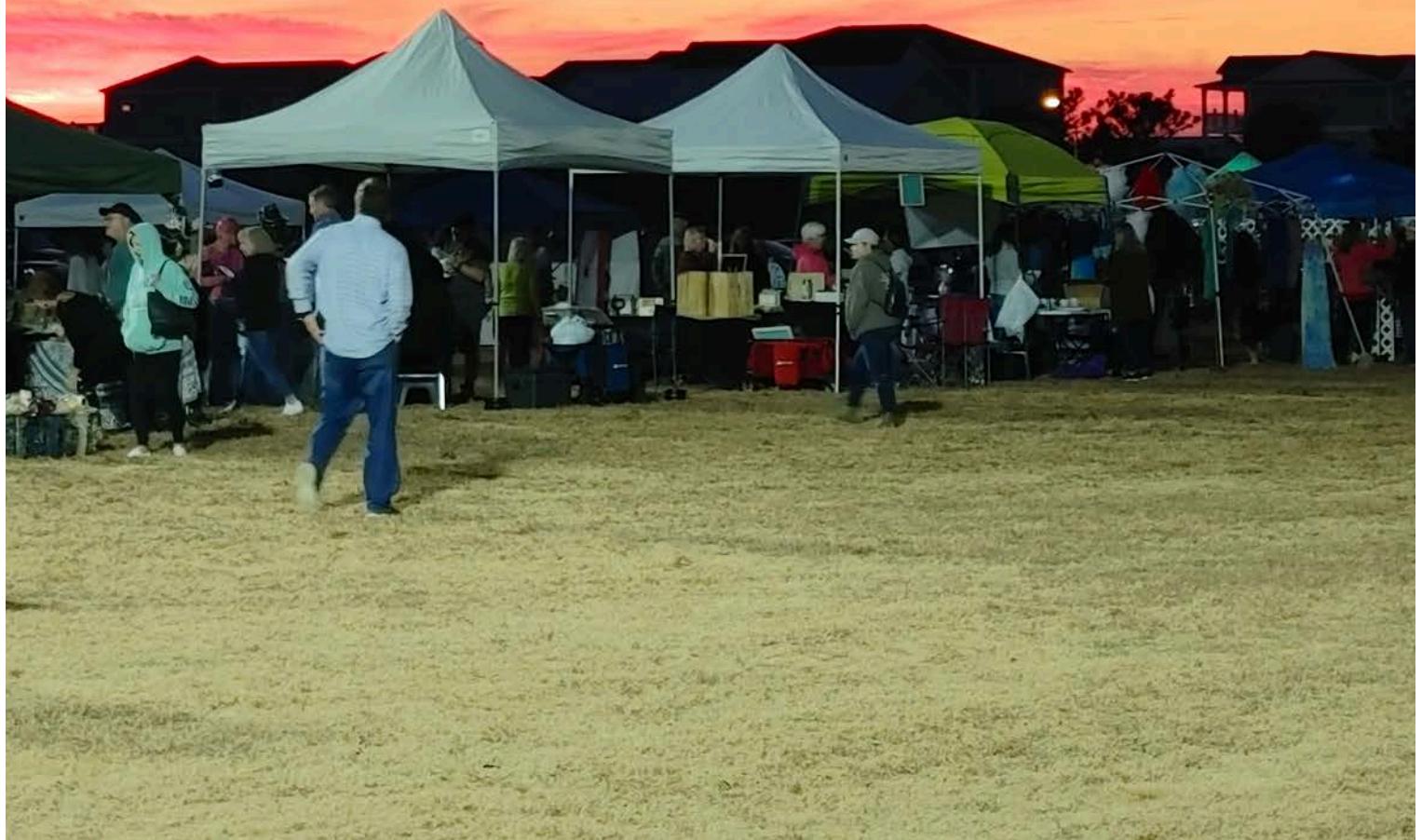
As of January 2022, a contractor has been secured for the repair of the area, which would entail the replacement of the floating dock. The Town's Public Works Department has also completed submission of all documents required to obtain the needed permits through the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA); which regulates development in the 20 coastal counties it applies to.

As of February, the Town anticipates a CAMA permit for construction to be granted within the coming weeks; which once in hand, will allow for scheduling of the rebuild project to move forward. Once underway, updates on this project will be provided on the PROJECTS page of the Town Website. To view this page, simply visit www.OakIslandNC.gov/PROJECTS or click the link below.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)



COMING EVENTS



COMING EVENTS & PROGRAMS

REMINDER: Information on all special events, recreation programs, and educational activities can be found on the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/EVENTS.

Presents the...

2022

Mardi Gras by the Sea Festival & Parade

Saturday, February 26, 2022

FESTIVAL: NOON - 4:00 PM • Middleton Park

PARADE: 1:00 PM start • SE 64th Street



One of the most celebrated
and anticipated events in

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Mardi Gras By The Sea Festival

WHEN: Saturday, February 26, 2022 • Noon - 4:00 PM

WHERE: Middleton Park (SE 46th Street & E Dolphin Drive)

COST: Free to attend (vendor fees vary)

ABOUT: One of the most anticipated and celebrated events in the Town of Oak Island returns for 2022 with even more fun and entertaining activities to offer! The 2022 Mardi Gras By The Sea Festival will feature a traditional parade, a full farmers and craft artisan market, special Kid Zone, and live music from The Back Porch Rockers. **NOTE:** The PARADE starts at 1:00 PM on SE 64th St., and will travel down E Oak Island Dr., to end at SE 46th St.

To submit an application as a parade entry, or to become a market vendor, visit: www.OakIslandNC.com/EVENTS and click on the links provided in the description.

Holiday Bingo

WHEN: February 14, March 14, and April 11 • 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

WHERE: Recreation Center • 3003 E. Oak Island Dr.

WHO: Youth Category (5-14 years) / Adult Category (15 years & older)

COST: \$3 in Advance / \$5 at Door (as space allows)

ABOUT: Celebrate your favorite holidays with friends, family, and your social circle while competing for seasonal goodies at OKI Recreation Center. Featuring prizes for both youth and adult categories, it's the perfect way to make memories with your loved ones this holiday season. Spaces are limited, so secure seats in advance by registering through the RecDesk application at the bottom of this page. Dotters will not be provided. For questions simply reach out to Recreation Center Supervisor, Carrie Winkler at 910-278-5518, or cwinkler@oakislandnc.com.



TOWN OF OAK ISLAND'S

www.oakisland.com | www.oakisland.org | www.oakislandnc.org



Cupid's Kids Night

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12TH

AGES 6-12 YEARS

\$8 RESIDENTS / \$13 NON RESIDENTS

RATES INCREASE \$5 AFTER FEBRUARY 1ST

While you're spending a night out on the town,
let the kiddos get crafty at Oak Island's
Ocean Education Center! Participants will love
the Valentine's themed crafts, movie, and
games followed by a celebratory pizza party!



Town of
Oak Island
Recreation

Cupid's Kids Night

WHEN: Saturday, February 12 • 5:30 PM - 8:30 PM

WHERE: Ocean Education Center • 4700 E Oak Island Dr. Suite C

WHO: Ages 6 - 12

COST: \$8 Town of Oak Island Residents / \$13 Island Visitors & Non-Residents (NOTE: Fees increase \$5 beginning February 1)

ABOUT: While you're spending a night out on the town, let the kiddos get crafty at Oak Island Community Resource Center! Participants will love the Valentine's themed crafts, movie, and games followed by a celebratory pizza party! Children must be 6-12 years old. For questions contact Recreation Center Supervisor, Carrie Winkler at 910-278-5518 or cwinkler@oakislandnc.com.

"Lucky to Have You" Dance

WHEN: Friday, March 18, 2022 • 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

WHERE: Community Center • 4701 E Oak Island Drive

COST: \$20 / couple (residents) • \$25 / couple (non-residents) • \$5 each additional ticket

ABOUT: Come dressed in your Sunday Best and be sure to wear GREEN, to share a special evening of dinner and dancing with the one you love! A special occasion for all ages that you'll remember for a lifetime. Tickets can be purchased until **Friday, March 11** at the Recreation Center! For details, call Ryan at 910-278-4747 or email rgordon@oakislandnc.com.



Presents the...

“Lucky To Have You” Dance



WHEN: Friday, March 18, 2022
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

WHERE: Community Center
4701 E Oak Island Dr.

COST: \$20 / couple (residents)
\$25 / couple (non-residents)
\$5 each additional ticket

PLEASE NOTE: There are **MANY** fun, educational, and exciting events and programs planned for the month ahead (way too many to list here)! For a complete list of upcoming activities, contact the Recreation Department at **910-278-5518**, or visit the **EVENTS** page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/EVENTS, or just click the link below.

[**CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE**](#)

DIVISION FEATURE



CUSTOMER
SERVICE

DIVISION FEATURE: PUBLIC UTILITIES BILLING

In the off-chance you weren't aware, The Town of Oak Island ... is a **Town**. Don't believe us? It's right there, in the name: the **Town** of *Oak Island*. Like most any other town or municipality, Oak Island works hard to provide the amenities and public services we've come to expect from any modern civilized settlement. However, the employees most often seen physically providing those services; that is, the ones in trucks and hard hats digging at the end of your street, are only a part of the overall process.

The Oak Island Public Utilities Department provides water service and wastewater collection and treatment, ensuring the Town complies with all state and federal regulations. While most employees work to handle things like new tap installations and day-to-day maintenance, there's one vital resource they need to be able to continue providing those services ... *a paycheck*.

That is where the very important, but often less revered role of the **Utility Billing** comes into play. Utility Billing provides the billing and collection responsibilities for all utility services, including water, sewer, storm water and solid waste billing. If that isn't enough, they are also responsible for creation of new customer accounts in the database; preparation of final bills and account close outs; bank drafts; entering utility payments; preparation of notices; and handling more complex customer issues.

PROFILE: *Utility Billing Specialist:* Donna Braam is fairly new to the role of utility billing, but not with serving the public. Previously a paralegal for almost 30 years, her office skills and customer service experience have proven invaluable since stepping into the role just a couple months ago. Originally from outside the Washington D.C. area, Braam made the "swift decision" to relocate to Oak Island nearly two decades ago, after falling in love with the Town while on vacation.

"I fell in love with the much more relaxed lifestyle that our town offers, and I made a swift decision that this was where I wanted to raise my kids and eventually retire. Best decision I've ever made."

Working for the Town was something she had already been considering, and in late 2021, the position and timing all aligned to bring her right where she wanted to be.



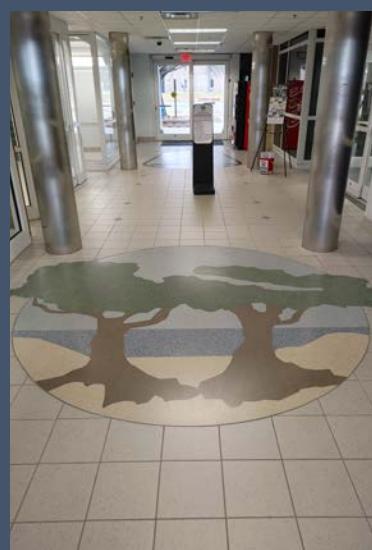
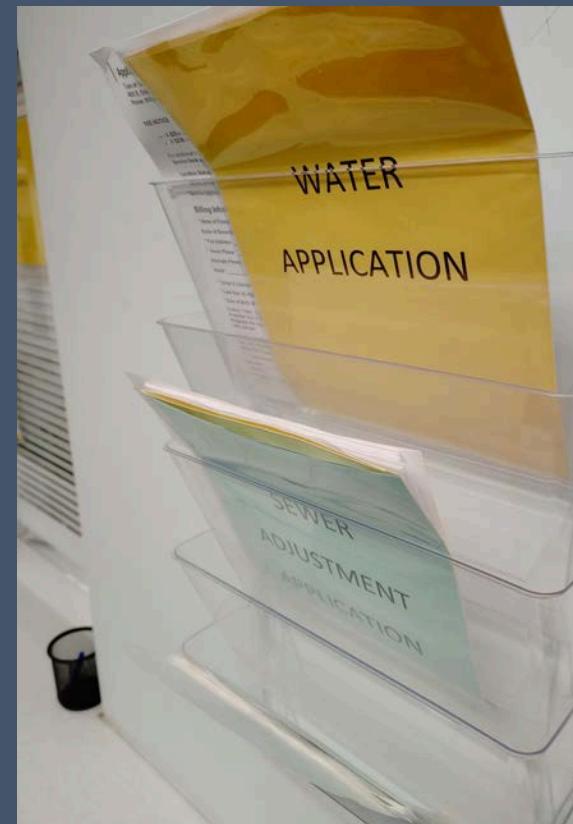


It's about balance. Much more than just "databases and cutoff notices" the role of Utility Billing Specialist requires a finely tuned combination of accounting and customer interaction. To Donna, this can prove especially rewarding when a conversation with a customer ends with them being satisfied with the outcome of their discussion.

"Working for the Town makes me feel like I am now a part of something that is always striving to improve our beautiful community."

Even though the result may not always be what they'd hoped for, Donna always works to ensure they know they've been heard, and provided solutions to the best of her ability.

In fact, the Utility Billing Specialist's work involves **extensive** customer contact by phone and in person, and requires considerable knowledge of the Town's utility customer service policies and field activities. As should be expected with financial transactions, communication skills including tact and courtesy are a must!



Although serving to provide residents' public utility needs, the position operates as a division of the Finance Department. All work is performed under regular supervision and is evaluated through conferences, records reviews, and accuracy reports. The position works closely with the Customer Service Representatives behind the Customer Service Desk, on the first floor of Town Hall. Standard equipment and "tools of the trade" for the Utility Billing Specialist involve a wide array of mostly software-based applications. These help accomplish tasks from data entry (*Tyler Incode*) for utility billing, and quality assurance (Sensus Analytics) to identify anomalies indicating leaks, or errors, etc.

While receiving bills and making payments rarely lands on anyone's "top 5 enjoyable activities" list, their role in providing the municipal services we rely on everyday is undeniable. Without Utility Billing, and the Billing Specialist and Customer Service Representatives who help process that billing everyday, there wouldn't be any funds to provide for those trucks and hard hats; not to mention the equally committed employees filling them out. Many people find the world of numbers to be fascinating and fun, but it takes special commitment to ensure they are fair and feasible as well.

The Utility Billing Specialist, along with the entire Customer Service staff do not work for a major corporation, in a call center thousands of miles from Oak Island. They receive the same services as their neighbors, and have an equally vested interest in ensuring all accounts are treated with the same care and professionalism as they would want for themselves. To learn more about Utility Billing, utility accounts, or to just contact a customer service representative directly, call Town Hall at 910-278-5011. To establish, transfer, or discontinue utility services altogether, visit the **Utility Service Connection** page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/SERVICE, or simply click the link below.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

PHOTO REVIEW

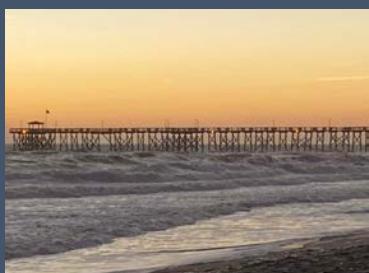


PHOTO REVIEW: JANUARY 2022

PLEASE NOTE: For the first time in the history of ***The CURRENT***, the Photo Review section has been opened to reader submissions. There is a wealth of artistic talent found in the residents and visitors to Oak Island. This section will now allow for greater exposure of the artistic contributions made by members of the Oak Island Community. Submissions are donated, and not compensated by any means other than courtesy credit here. Please view the captions below for information on this month's contributors. For information on how to submit a photograph (must be from the current month only), please visit www.OakIslandNC.gov/CURRENT.

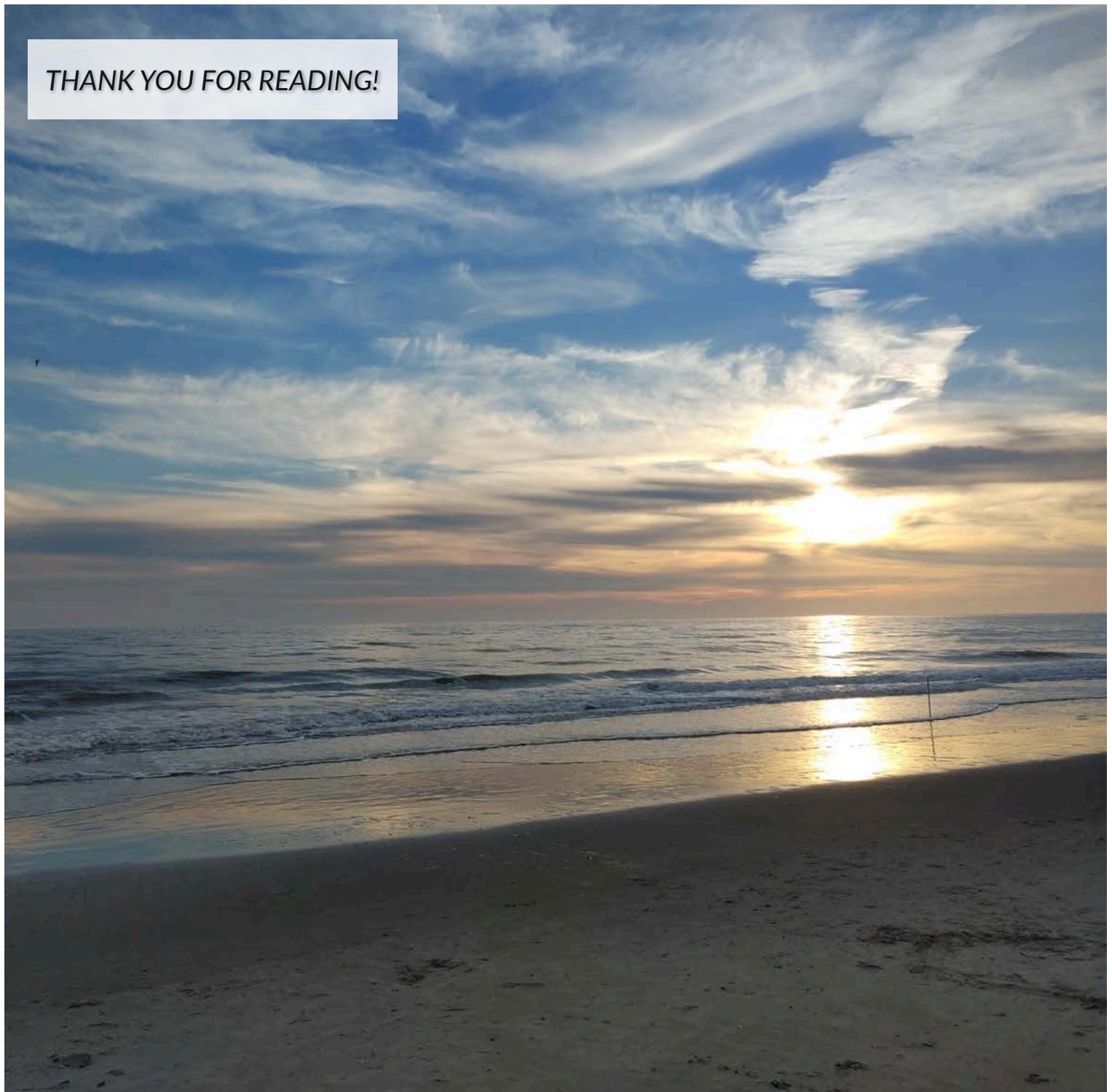






Photos provided by (in order of placement): Allison Miller_SE 31st Street Davis Canal Walkover • Anita Kunkle_Bike Racks on W Beach Drive • Anna Priester_OKI Fishing Pier • Benjamin Ford_Icy Day on SE 58th St • Bradley Kopp_Keziah Street • Brenda Torrey Photography_Near Oak Island Pier Complex • Carol Leffew_3rd PL E • Cindy Rzepka Hughes_Davis Canal • Cindy Rzepka Hughes_Moon Over Beach • Daniel Lezius_Ocean Crest Fishing Pier • Eric Miller_Birthday Sunset at 32nd PL E • Haley Bolton_Iced over palm at SE 67th Street • Haley Bolton_Snow on the Point • Haley Bolton_Wintertime Surfing • Jack Vereen_SE 42nd Street • Janet O'Toole_SE 78th Street • Laurie Williamson Doherty_Malcolm Register Park • Lisa O'Brien Bradley_New Years Day at the Pier • Lynn Patrick Davis_SE 40th street • Meredith Oehler Jones_Snowy Day on the OKI Pier • Nancy B. Hamlin_Ducks at May Moore Park • Ray Barkalow_from Oak Island Pier • Wesley Rich_The Point at Sunrise

THANK YOU FOR READING!



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