

July 2022

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Welcome to July

WELCOME to the JULY 2022 edition of **THE CURRENT**.

"When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation." Many people know that it was Thomas Jefferson who penned those famous words over 243 years ago, but few realize he didn't actually do it alone.

Jefferson, along with John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman comprised the *Committee of Five*, in presenting their boldly written declaration during the Second Continental Congress meeting on that hot, humid, and

non-air-conditioned July 2nd morning. Two days later the final wording was approved, forever declaring that "these United States" were an independent nation. John Adams would later write the day "*ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more.*"

Fast forward twelve score and three years later, and that's where we come in ... ***with a pile of pyrotechnics loaded up on a pier!*** Much like America itself joined 13 colonies on July 4th to become a new nation, stronger together, the Town of Oak Island celebrates its heritage on July 1st in a similar way. You see; *one score and several years ago* (23, actually), *our forefathers (or peers, depending on your age) brought forth on this island a new municipality, conceived of the Long and Yaupon Beaches, and dedicated to the proposition that all towns were merged equally.* Now, we still like Adams' idea of a good time celebrating though, and that's why every July 1st Oak Island's own BEACH DAY fills up the sand with activity, and lights up the sky with color! So throw on your shades, pop in the earplugs, and grab a good dose of freedom, as we say Happy Birthday **America**, Happy Birthday **Oak Island** ... and welcome to **THE CURRENT.**



MONTHLY REVIEW

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

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Council Recap

The Town Council's regular meeting on **June 14, 2022** began with two (2) Public Hearings **(1)** Comments were received on the proposed FY 2022-2023 Budget. These comments will be included or summarized in the meeting minutes. **(2)** Public Comments were received on a Special Use Permit Application for a 6963 Kings Lynn Drive (Large Single-Family Residential Home) Application. [View the Permit Application](#)

Home). A motion to approve the Permit was approved 4-1.

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS: (1) Council appointed Maureen Burns to the unexpired term ending June 2023, and appointed Margaret Johnson, David Merkle and Allen Dearly to terms ending June 2025 for the Environmental Advisory Committee. (2) Council appointed Bill Millard to the Recreation Advisory Board. (3) There were no appointments to the Par 3 Golf Advisory Committee.

COUNCIL REPORTS: Councilmember Mark Martin reported on new signage identifying areas where Low Speed Vehicles are not permitted. Councilmember Bill Craft reminded of the new public art project, for which funding is included in the FY 2022-23 budget. Councilmember Sheila Mansfield Bell reported that she had recently attended the NC League of Municipalities 4th Annual Town & State Dinner, along with the Town Manager and the Finance Director. Mayor Pro Tem John Bach reported that he had directed Town staff to provide an updated Incident Command Structure report. Mayor Elizabeth White congratulated Town Staff on the work done to bring together the Proposed Budget in a way that accomplished the stated goals, and kept take rates consistent.

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS: Council unanimously appointed Carol Schroeder to the Par 3 Golf Advisory Board.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS: Police Chief Charlie Morris provided a report on the new Beach Services Unit, the new speed monitoring radar trailer, and Police traffic /safety preparations ahead of the July 4 holiday weekend. Town Attorney Brian Edes reported on recent court decisions that provide more favor towards municipalities in cases of regarding zoning ordinances and property values. **NOTE:**

Monthly Department Reports are available to view any time on the Town Website at www.OaklandNC.gov/DEPT.

OLD BUSINESS: (1) A summary of the updated Development Plan Agreement for the Williamson Tract will be included in the meeting minutes.

NEW BUSINESS: (1) Council adopted the FY 2022-23 Budget as presented. (2) Council adopted the FY 2022-23 Fee Schedule as presented. (3) Council adopted the FY 2022-23 Pay Classification Scale as presented. (4) Council approved a fee schedule amendment, increasing fines for violations of the Town's Dune Protection Ordinances. (5) Council approved amendments to Section 14-127, 129, and 132 of the Town Ordinances (Protection of Sea Dunes, Sea Turtles, and other Wildlife Habitat). (6) Council discussed Mayor Pro Temp John

Bach's requested Administrative Report on the Beach Services Unit, Emergency Vehicle Accesses, and Beach Access Parking. The reports will be summarized in the Minutes.

(7) Councilmember Bill Craft noted that nominations for the new **Trees to Sea Citizenship Award** will be forthcoming. (8) Council approved a Budget Amendment of \$42,000 to purchase of a new vehicle for the Town's administrative fleet, with the vehicle it replaces to be utilized by other departments.

The Council then voted to Adjourn. To view the video, agenda, and minutes from this or any other Town Council meeting, just visit the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/MEETINGS, or click the link below.

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New Notification with OKInformation

One of the great things about the Town of Oak Island, is that there is always **something** going on. In fact, there's so much going on, the biggest problem for many is how to keep track of it all. While there are things like, an award-winning Town newsletter (*cough cough* The CURRENT), the Town

Website, and a wide selection of online "local" gossip pages ... we think you deserve a more direct service for receiving notifications.

Until now, the **e-Notification** system on the Town Website has been used to delivery email notification for for the latest news & notices from Oak Island. Until now. Beginning on July 1, the Town is transitioning to an entirely new public notification system, which we're calling **OKInformation** ("oki-information"). The new OKInformation system has been in development for several months, and is finally ready for its summertime rollout. It features a more streamlined and efficient email delivery, and adds a new text message feature for notification during emergencies - *right to your phone!*

IMPORTANT NOTE: This is an entirely new system, and accounts from the previous system **WILL NOT** be carried over. So be sure to visit the new **OKInformation Signup**

Page and register your email or phone today! To sign up for this new public notification service **just visit www.OakIslandNC.gov/INFO**, or click the links provided below:

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Keep The Paths Clear from the "Street to the Sea"

If there's an emergency in the water or on the public beach areas, most folks find it comforting to know that among Oak Island's 65 Public Beach Access Locations, 22 of them are specifically designed to accommodate emergency response vehicles. In addition, the first responder agencies within Oak Island have a consistent track record of being able to reach any of these Access Locations within a matter of minutes. However, getting **TO** an Access Location is only half of the challenge. For all the benefit a speedy response can provide, a parking lot full of trucks or a beach strand full of tents can dramatically reduce the effort.

That's why the Town recently launched an effort to redesign and re-sign every Emergency Vehicle Access Location throughout the entire Town.

Starting in early June, staff with the Public Works Department began an assessment and restructuring of the parking lots for many of these accesses. The new parking layout features parallel parking on one side, as opposed to the previous diagonal slant on both sides. This new arrangement helps prevent the back ends of two longer vehicles from creating a "pinch point" that restricts vehicle access.

In addition, brand new signage has been designed and installed in all locations as well. This new signage features the new "**Street to the Sea**" slogan, reminding visitors to keep emergency paths clear, from the street edge all the way to the water's edge.

For a full listing of all Emergency Vehicle Access Locations,

just visit the Beach Safety page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/SAFETY or click the link below.

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Respect The Road: Redeux

As the number of people in Oak Island increases from seasonal visitors and new residents, so does the number of vehicles. Specifically, the number of **Low Speed Vehicles**. While their usefulness can be a debated topic, the fact remains they are popular. With so many people already enjoying them as a preferred means of travel, and so many more joining in, the Oak Island Police Department decided to revisit, *and revise* one of their more popular publications.

The **RESPECT THE ROAD** campaign is back for 2022, and features a newly revised information card (*pictured*). The new cards showcase the Town Logo, along with larger, sharper fonts and revised language. They provide important information about not only the laws concerning LSVs, but also the "best practices" of how to use them in Town.

Several hundred have been printed up, and are being provided to the Police Department, the Beach Services Unit, and local golf cart rental agencies. They are also available to pick up on the reception desk in the lobby of Town Hall.

IF you can't make it down to Town Hall, you can always print one out yourself, or just download it from the Low Speed Vehicle Information page of the Town Website. Simply visit the page at www.OakIslandNC.gov/LSV or click the link below.

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Skatepark Meeting Success

Skatepark Meeting Success

On Thursday, June 23, 2022 at 5:00 PM, the Recreation Department hosted their second Public Input Meeting for the Kevin Bell Skatepark Redesign Project. The meeting was held in the Town Council Chambers, with virtual attendance from Brad Siedlecki, President of Pillar Design Studios / Pillar Skateparks.

Siedlecki presented updated visual renderings of the new skatepark, which incorporated design recommendations from the first Public Input Meeting, held in January of this year.

Along with the new renderings, a flythrough animation was debuted, followed by a brief period for questions. Currently, Pillar Design Studios anticipates a start date in the early fall, around Labor Day, with construction lasting not too far into 2023. Despite rising costs in construction and ongoing materials shortages, Siedlecki noted that as of now all components of the proposed design still fit within budget. He said residents and visitors should definitely be enjoying the new skatepark by next summer.

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, strong community support was generated to see park rebuilt in an even bigger and better fashion. The Skatepark Rebuild Project maintains a dedicated page on the Town Website, where all of the proposed design images can be viewed, along with the flythrough animation. To view this page, simply visit:

www.OakIslandNC.gov/SKATE or click the link below.

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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 [Oak Island Fire Department](#),

the [Beach Preservation Society](#), the [Friends of Parks Foundation](#), the [Sea Turtle Protection Program](#), the [Friends of the Library](#), and [Oak Island Water Rescue](#), among others. For more information on the content presented in this section, please reach out to the contributing department or organization directly.

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Oak Island Fire Department: Fireworks Safety

While summer is all about having fun, and July is largely spent celebrating the birth of both our nation (July 4) and our Town (July 1), one thing that isn't fun or celebrated is the extra

resources, overtime, and reporting we use up around this time every year. We all want our summer to be a blast, but that doesn't have to mean literally! That's why we kicked off the summer celebrations with a serious discussion on **#FireworksSafety** ... for YOU, for YOUR HOME, and for YOUR NEIGHBORS.

Remember that anything with a flame or spark can be a potential fire. While NC General Statutes 14-410 and 14-414 prohibit explosive or aerial fireworks such as roman candles or rockets, smaller permitted products like firecrackers and sparklers can still burn at temperatures of up to 2,000° F. They accounted for almost 20% of the 11,500 fireworks injuries reported in 2021.

Never let kids play unattended with these items, and always take necessary precautions to ensure your own personal safety. Also, please (and we can't say this enough, it seems) DO NOT operate any product or device while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Also consider the safety of your home. If you're knowledge of operating an aerial firework is simply "light it and run" – then we could be showing up at your house! Between the ever-shifting coastal winds and the currently dry conditions, it's just not worth risking your dream home, family cottage, or worse yet a rented vacation property.

Finally, don't forget the safety and common courtesy to your neighbors. Remember, there's no need to go lighting off "the good stuff" – just leave it to the professionals! Trust us, your

neighbors (*and their pets!*) don't need to see your brand of "midnight patriotism" on display, courtesy of your trip across state lines and \$1,500 in additional credit card debt. And before using the excuse of "it's for the kids" remember that 20% of the nearly 16,000 firework-related injuries in 2021 were to children.

This summer, save your time and money ... and possibly even save your neighbors' roof! Go check out an amazing shows offered by Oak Island and surrounding communities, where the only thing you have to setup is a your favorite beach chair! To learn more about the Oak Island Fire Department and the many ways we work to help serve our community, just visit the our page on the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/FD, or click the link below.

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Beach Preservation Society: Get Involved

(Contributed by Rosanne Fortner) There are so many things going on with the Oak Island Beach Preservation Society, Inc. (BPSI), that the nonprofit is increasing the size of its Board of Directors as well as replacing those whose three-year terms are expiring.

Applicants for the Board must be members of the organization and be able to attend the majority of monthly meetings, currently held on the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM.

If serving the beach is important to you, whether service is on the strand, at public accesses or from your home, we welcome your application. Read about last year's activities in the Annual Report attached to our home page www.beachoki.org and apply using the form at www.beachoki.org/getinvolved. A virtual information session will be held if interest warrants.

The Oak Island Beach Preservation Society, Inc. (BPSI), is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization, dedicated to education and community engagement to enhance the Oak Island beach

experience and leave the beach better for everyone now and in the future. To learn more about BPSI and how you can help support their mission, visit their website at www.beachoki.org or click the link below.

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NC 4th of July Festival

The history of the Fourth of July Festival celebration was first recorded in a newspaper in 1795. When ships lying at anchor in the harbor would discharge salutes from their cannons at

in the harbor would discharge salutes from their cannons at daybreak and throughout the day, with the ships officers and town officials sharing companionship toasting the young nations independence. In 1972 we were incorporated as the **N.C. 4th of July Festival.**

Headquartered in neighboring Southport, the NC 4th of July Festival and the Town of Oak Island's Beach Day have forged a partnership in recent years. This has allowed both municipalities to offer an even larger expansion of activities and events.

Events for 2022 include: ceremonies, concerts, live music, arts & crafts markets, a car show, children's entertainment, games, food ... even a live professional wrestling match! And of course, no one could forget the FIREWORKS!

Displays will be set off from both the Oak Island Pier on Friday July AND from the Southport Pier on July 4.

For complete details on the history of the Festival and a full listing of all the events it offers, visit their website at: www.nc4thofjuly.com/events or click the link below.

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NEWS & NOTICES:

JULY

Council & Board Meetings

REMINDER: All televised public meetings listed below will be broadcast live on OKI-TV (Spectrum Cable channel 8 / 122), as well as livestreamed on the Town Website. Meeting agendas, minutes, and any livestreamed or recorded videos are available at www.OakIslandNC.gov/MEETINGS.

TOWN COUNCIL (televised) will hold a regular meeting on **Tuesday, July 12, 2022 at 6:00 PM** 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, July 21, 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.

PLANNING BOARD (televised) will hold a regular meeting on **Thursday, July 21, 2022 at 10:30 AM** in the Council Chambers, located on the second floor of Town Hall at 4601 E Oak Island Drive.

CLOSURES & HOLIDAYS

INDEPENDENCE DAY: Administrative Offices for the Town of Oak Island will be **CLOSED** on **Monday, July 4, 2022** in observance of **Independence Day**.

PLEASE NOTE: There will be **NO** interruption of **Garbage & Recycling Collection** services for Independence Day, however services may be delayed due to higher than normal volume. The **Collection Convenience Site**, located at 4110 Airport Road will be **CLOSED** on Saturday July 2.

Police, fire, and other emergency services are not affected

• OILS, H.S., and other emergencies, etc. These are not directed 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 well. For all 2022 closure dates available, the *Holiday Calendar* can be found on the Town Website at: www.OakIslandNC.gov/HOLIDAY.

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Planning & Building ... New Departments

Recently, the Town hired Matt Kirkland (*pictured*) as the new **Oak Island Planning Director**. If that title sounds a little unfamiliar, it's because Matt is the first one to carry it! Kirkland's hire marks a transformation of the role previously referred to as the Planning & Zoning Administrator. This isn't a "name only" change either. The new title comes with an entirely new and expanded set of responsibilities.

To help meet the demands of the Town's growing population and anticipated future development, the Town Council approved dividing of the Development Services Department into two new departments. This shift created the **Planning Department** and **Building Department**, respectively. Both

distinct, yet still partnering in the services they offer under the umbrella of Development Services.

The new **Planning Department** works to regulate and administer the Town's zoning, development, and land use. The **Building Department** will oversee the implementation of building codes, inspections, and standards for constructed objects.

Matt Kirkland and the Planning Department will be fully featured in an upcoming edition of *The CURRENT*. In the meantime, you can check out the web pages for both departments on the Town Website. Still housed under the "Development Services" section, you can find the Planning Department at www.OakIslandNC.gov/PL, and the Building Department at www.OakIslandNC.gov/BD, or just click the link below.

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Pier Closure Notice

BEACH DAY has arrived! That wonderful time when we celebrate the founding of the Town of Oak Island ... with FIREWORKS! It is also that extremely rare event in which the Oak Island Pier closes early (*for reference, the Pier is open every day of the year, and usually only closes for inclement weather*).

The OKI Pier and Pier House will **CLOSE** at 7:00 PM on Friday, July 1, to allow for the Fireworks display, scheduled for around 9:00 PM. All facilities will REOPEN at 6:00 AM on July 2, and operate on their normal schedule throughout the remainder of the holiday weekend.

To help everyone prepare for a fun, safe event, the Oak Island Police Department will also **CLOSE** the parking lot at the Pier Complex **ALL DAY** on Friday, July 1. This will include temporary closures of surrounding streets (*pictured*) throughout the mid-day to accommodate the unloading of fireworks, and reduce congestion during and after the display that evening.

However, the public parking lot at 604 Ocean Dr. will remain **OPEN**. There is **NO** event-specific parking, all publicly

available spaces are first-come, first serve

For more information on street closures and traffic flow related to the Beach Day fireworks, just visit the Beach Day page of the Town Website at

www.OakIslandNC.gov/BeachDay or click the link below.

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Collection, Convenience Site, & Common Courtesy

Independence Day is one of, if not the most important holidays to citizens of the U.S. While the holiday itself is made possible largely by the sacrifice of our brave military men and women; it should also be noted that our ability to **enjoy** that holiday is made possible by another field of public service.

Throughout the entire July 4th holiday weekend, the Garbage & Recycling Collection schedule will NOT be altered. As with any major holiday weekend, collection may run a little slower on due to increases volume, but, but no service interruption is expected. **NOTE:** The Town's Disposal Convenience Site, located at 4110 Airport Road, will be CLOSED on Saturday, July 2, 2022.

It is public services like these, and the people who provide them, that often go unnoticed or un-thanked during holidays. While many take this time to spend times with their families, travel on vacations, or just escape the outdoor summer heat, those in fields like sanitation, construction, and maintenance, work tirelessly to ensure we have the clean communities to celebrate in. So be sure to include a little common courtesy in your holiday plans this year, and give a smile, wave, or thanks to help make your life a little easier.

For full details on Garbage & Recycling Collection, as well as the Convenience Site can be found in the Solid Waste Division section under the Public Works page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/PW, or by clicking the link below.

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Make a Splash - With a Private Party

By far, one of the coolest spots to be during the summer is the [Oak Island Splashpad](#) ... and we mean that both literally and figuratively!

Most people know the splash pad is open seasonally throughout the late spring and summer months, from 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM daily. However, did you know you can also get in "after hours" like some kind of Special Splashpad VIP?

That's right! The Oak Island Splashpad is actually available in

hourly rentals for private functions from 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM each day! While admission is free during regular hours, for just \$100 per hour (with a refundable deposit of \$100) you could get the **WHOLE** Splashpad for your own birthday party, family gathering or other private event.

In fact most public park facilities are available for rental or reservation, including the many picnic shelters.

For general questions on park or picnic shelter reservations, contact the Recreation Department at 910-278-5518. To make a rental specifically for the Splashpad, call **910-201-8015** or email rbraam@oakislandnc.gov. To download a Splashpad Rental Application, just click on the link below.

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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.

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Beach Day

Activities will be available throughout the entire day at multiple locations around Town. Full activity schedules based on location are provided below.

LOCATION: Middleton Park, 4610 E. Dolphin Drive, Oak Island

- 8:00 AM: Horseshoe Tournament
- 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM: Inflatable Rides
- 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM: Food

LOCATION: Beachfront at Cabana (SE 46th Street &, E Beach Drive)

- 10:00 AM: Registration for Games -First come first serve to participate in the bocce ball, cornhole, volleyball and sandcastle building tournament.
- 11:00 AM: Bocce Ball Tournament
- 11:00 AM: Cornhole Tournament
- 11:00 AM: Beach Volleyball Tournament
- 1:00 PM: Sandcastle Building Competition

LOCATION: Middleton Park Amphitheater, 4610 E. Dolphin Drive, Oak Island

- 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM: Beach Day Concert - Cat 5 Band
- 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM: Food
- 6:00 PM - 6:45 PM: Shag Contest Registration
- 7:00 PM - Until: Shag Contest begins when band breaks

LOCATION: Oak Island Pier (705 Ocean Drive)

- 5:30 PM: Live music on the Pier by McGuire
- 9:00 PM: Beach Day & Oak Island Anniversary Fireworks

To view the full schedule and traffic information, visit
www.OakIslandNC.gov/BeachDay or click the link below.

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Summer Concert Series

WHEN: (Most Fridays) May 27 - September 3, 2022 • 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM

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

COST: Free to attend

ABOUT: The sun is out, the fun is back, and the “Bands by the Beach” are once again ready to rock, groove, swing, and swoon their way through the soundtrack of your perfect summer! For 15 weeks, from May to September, we turn the amps up to “11” and come together for the annual Town of Oak Island Summer Concert Series.

To view the full concert series schedule, visit

www.OakIslandNC.gov/CONCERT or click the link below.

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Story Time By the Sea

WHEN: Tuesdays • June 21st, July 19th, & August 16th • 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

WHERE: Oak Island Cabana • Corner of SE 46th & E. Beach Dr.

COST: Free to attend with Pre-Registration Required

(Registration available at: www.OakIslandNC.gov/RecDesk)

AGES: 12 Years & Under

ABOUT: Come and stop by the Oak Island Cabana for a series and crafts arranged by the Oak Island Recreation Department.

Held monthly beginning in May, this program is free with pre-registration required. For questions or more information reach out to Program Supervisor, Ryan Gordon, at rgordon@oakislandnc.gov or by calling 910-278-4747

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Fort Fisher Aquarium Visit

WHEN: July 7 - & - August 4 • 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

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

COST: Free to attend

ABOUT: Oak Island Beach Preservation Society has partnered with Fort Fisher Aquarium and Oak Island Recreation Department to bring fantastic nature to our community residents and guests. All programs will be held at the Oak Island Recreation Center (3003 E. Oak Island Dr.) at 2:00 PM. Programs are **FREE** to all participants!

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 & PROGRAMS** page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/EVENTS, or just click the link below.

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DIVISION FEATURE: OCEAN EDUCATION CENTER

PLEASE NOTE: This article wraps up a special two-part summer series covering both the [Nature Center](#) and the [Ocean Education Center](#). Check out the June edition for information on the Nature Center.

Deep in the heart of Town, a mighty best from the deepest depths has come to make his home on the mean streets of E Oak Island Drive. Over 11 feet long and weighing over half a ton, this saw-toothed creature regularly makes his presence known each day ... **to hundreds of happy children who squeal with delight at seeing him!** That creature is the record breaking "YB Jaws" and he's just one of dozens of display available at the ***[Oak Island Ocean Education Center](#)***.

Located just across from the Town Hall at 4700 E. Oak Island Dr., the Ocean Education Center is a favorite of visitors and locals alike. The tight space of this storefront facility packs an

entire ocean's worth of educational and entertaining activities, for sea explorers of all ages. Uncover secrets hidden in the sand, learn about sea turtles, crabs, dolphins, and other classic sea animals, see how you measure up next to an 8ft. long Great White!

In 1952 Dan and Inez Shannon moved to Oak Island and purchased a house on E Beach Drive, and shortly thereafter they built a store. In 1954, Hurricane Hazel destroyed both the home and the business. The Shannons eventually rebuilt both the home and the business, which later housed the Town's first post office, as well as a gas station. The business was called **Shannon's Texaco**. According to local residents, it was the place to be in the 1950s 60s and 70s. Sometime after the Shannon's deaths, the building was donated to the Town, where it would eventually be transformed into the Oak Island Ocean Education Center. This building stood for many years until it was destroyed by Hurricane Florence in 2018 and had to be demolished. In 2021, the Ocean Education Center was reopened in its current location, and has been serving the public steadily ever since.

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PROFILE: *Recreation Program Supervisor: Ryan Gordon (pictured - the one on the right)* is without doubt one of the hardest working individuals you will encounter in the

Recreation Department. At least, we're pretty sure that's what people would say, *if they could get him to stop working long enough to tell him!*

As a Program Supervisor, and general "Right Hand Ryan" to the Recreation Director, Gordon is constantly running from one location to another. Whether he is in a kayak leading a tour down the Davis Canal, or darting between vendor tents at Middleton Park, Ryan oversees the ground-level implementation for many of the Recreation Department's efforts.

Since coming to Oak Island over 6 years ago from the Town of Hope Mills, Ryan has served the community through coordinating special events, such as the Summer Concert Series and the Farmers' & Artisans' Market; as well as overseeing the various programs like Summer Day Camps and the Senior Trips.

By far though, one of his favorite responsibilities involves his time spent at the Ocean Education Center. Maybe it's seeing the children light up with wonder? Maybe it's knowing he's helped educate others on how to help preserve our most precious resource? Could be, but we're pretty sure it's because he gets to hang out with "YB Jaws" over there!

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SEASONAL SERVICE: While Ryan Gordon provides the coordination and oversight from a Town staff perspective, a small but dedicated group of volunteers help keep the Ocean Education Center operating on a daily basis. Scheduled by the "Volunteer" Volunteer Coordinator, Wayne Bookover, these volunteers share insight into many of the coasts biggest challenges and what we can do to help.

Because several of these volunteers also help in other areas, *operating hours* for the Ocean Education Center are divided throughout the week, to help accommodate staffing for the [Nature Center](#) as well (*more on that in the JUNE edition*).

This facility is largely operated on a volunteer basis, specific program schedules and operating hours may be subject to change. However, in general the Ocean Education Center is usually open for the summer season, from around Memorial Day to Labor.

Seasonal hours are 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM, every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

The Ocean Education Center holds various youth programs throughout the summer, so checking the page on the Town Website for updates is always encouraged.

Like its sibling facility the Nature Center, the Ocean Education Center is a busy place! With the central location in Town and easy access off of Oak Island Drive, the center sees an amazing flow of visitors each day. Throughout the month of June, the Center saw **over 600** regular visitors! This included 72 home school students, and nearly 40 participants in the *Story time by the Sea* satellite program at the Cabana on SE



Much like the ocean itself, the Center is constantly changing. Shifting exhibits to make room, adding new features, moving furniture to install new flooring (*and then moving it back when the flooring doesn't arrive!*). Along with a steady stream of donated time and resources, the Ocean Education Center combines its Town-allocated funding to maximize the visitor experience. The new and stylish features, such as a Oculus virtual reality headset system, are enhanced through the clever repurposing of donated materials. For example, an old discarded crab pot, when mixed with a small sand box and some donated figurines, becomes a great hands-on exhibit for learning about crustacean habitats. It's this unique fusion of high-end tools and low-tech creativity, that make the Ocean Education Center so much more than "the sum of its parts" (or rather, *its displays*). Immediately upon walking in, any adult would realize this isn't a multi-million dollar, state-of-the-art commercial facility. But give it a few minutes of observation, and you'll realize not a single child in the room cares about any of that. Look closely at the smiles on their faces, or the wonder in their eyes, and you quickly see that they're having the time of their lives! It doesn't matter if they're playing an undersea video game, or crafting squids out of paper cups, string, and googly eyes; because the Ocean Education Center, like the ocean itself taps into the most renewable resource of all ... ***a child's imagination!***

Each summer, the Oak Island Ocean Education Center continues to provide unique insights into the greatest aspect of what draws visitors to our Town, and captures residents to stay. While all ages are welcome, the Center frequently holds special programs specifically for kids and young adults, such as the *Storytime By The Sea*. There are several ways to stay up to date with the latest fun and educational offerings, with the most obvious being the dedicated Ocean Education Center page on the Town website at

www.OakIslandNC.gov/OCEAN. In addition to visiting the website or clicking the link below, you can also call the Recreation Department at 910-278-5518, or just stop by in-person during regular operating hours at 4700 E. Oak Island Dr.

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

PHOTO REVIEW

PLEASE NOTE: The *Photo Review* section contains reader-submitted photos, and allows 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. To contribute a submission (must be from the current month), please email the photo along with a description of the date, location, and photographer or business name to: photos@oakislandnc.gov.





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