

March 2022

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Welcome to March

WELCOME to the MARCH 2022 edition of **THE**

CURRENT. Oh, the wonderful green of Spring! After the cold, dark days of winter, we're usually ready to take that green in any form; whether it's a festive pinch-free clover worn on a jacket, or the full blossoming of a warm spring day, blessed by St. Patrick himself! Mind you, it's not that our actions change much in the winter. The walkers still walk the beach, the yogis still do the .. uh, *yoga-ing(?)*, and the pickleballers ... well, they'd still be flabjacking dillballs all over the kitchen in the snow if the competition were good enough. (Yes, *those were all real Pickleball terms!*)

Point being, a little bit of sunshine and expanded color spectrum doesn't change **who** we are; it just makes what **we do** a little more enjoyable! From Mardi Gras parades to Spring Fling festivals, the slide from February to March is a seamless, but certainly welcome, transition for Oak Islanders. And while there may be some other North Carolina islands known for

their "emerald" namesake, the Town of Oak Island will happily lay claim to a little green of our own, to welcome in another spring season! So grab a four-leaf clover and pin it to your favorite floatation device, as we drift down the MARCH 2022 edition of **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 **February 8, 2022** began with a public hearing, after which an extension request was approved to extend vested rights to DRAPAC for a development planned for N.C. 211. Following the public hearing, Mayor White read a proclamation, naming February 12 as "Hometown Heroes Day."

PUBLIC COMMENTS: While it is not usual policy for the Town Council to respond or interact, following Public Comments the Council directed staff to develop a "waiver exception" policy for the room setup fee at the Recreation Center. This waiver would apply to groups with certain financial hardships, nonprofits, and senior citizens.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS: Town Finance Director David Hatten provided highlights for revenue in January 2022, also noting that monthly financial reports are now available on the Finance Department page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/FINANCE. Development Services Director Steve Edwards reported that inspections were currently up 28% for the year so far, and that he was still actively recruiting to hire for a vacant Inspector Level II position.

Public Works Director Scott Thornall reported that walk/ramp

structure at 57th PI W which was damaged during Hurricane Isaias, has a contractor on-hand to begin its rebuild.

Additionally, Thornall had received word that the "shower towers" approved for purchase by the Town Council would be delivered within the following few weeks, to be installed for the upcoming summer season. The street paving contracts had slowed due to weather, **however**, Public Works staff reported internally placing more than 275 tons of hot asphalt in street repair and 1,500 tons of ABC stone in lot improvements since July 1.

OLD BUSINESS: **(I)** Council discussed the priorities identified at the Annual Council Retreat on January 19, and announced plans to hold a second retreat meeting, date TBD. **(II)** Council approved amendments to Section 4.7, Section 4.9, Section 6.13.17 and Appendix A – Definitions, of the Unified Development Ordinance. **(III)** Council approved the Phase II Beach Nourishment Contract with engineering firm Moffatt & Nichol.

NEW BUSINESS: **(I)** Council received an update on the Brunswick County Comprehensive Transportation Plan. **(II)** Council adopted a resolution declaring the intention to consider the closing of a portion of NE 54th Street (the street end, north of Yacht Drive). **(III)** Council approved the motion to initiate a program to award "Keys to the Town" in recognizing "Bright Light" citizens. Council directed staff to work on a proposed set of guidelines for the new program.

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.

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Second Special Meeting

On Monday, February 21, the Town Council held a special meeting for the purpose of beach nourishment. The February meeting was the second in a series of two (2) scheduled meetings (the first being on January 31), which were originally

meetings (the first being on January 31), which were originally proposed at the Council's regular meeting on January 11.

Like the previous meeting, the primary focus of the February 21 date was beach nourishment. Specifically, the discussion of alternative funding options for the [Beach Management Plan](#), as well as enforcement and administrative strategies for dune protection.

The council received a brief presentation from the Town Manager, David Kelly, followed by a report from the Assistant Police Chief, Frankie Cooke. In his report, Cooke noted that 12 new seasonal beach patrol and parking enforcement positions were currently being advertised for the Police Department to assist with summer time code enforcement. Following the reports Council received public input. While 4 people had signed up to speak prior to the meeting, an additional 4 people came forward to speak when prompted. In total, the meeting lasted just over an hour and a half, and concluded with several Council members expressing their appreciation for the public who provided input; while reaffirming their commitment to agreeing on solutions in the coming months.

As with regular meetings, both special meetings can be viewed at any time on the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/MEETINGS or by clicking the link below.

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Citizens Academy Concludes

On Thursday, February 24, 2022 the first **Citizens Academy** class in over two (2) years celebrated its completion, with a brief ceremony and dinner, held at the [801 Ocean Events Center](#).

The program had been on a hiatus since 2020 due to COVID response measures and was met with tremendous interest upon its return announcement in January. Registration for the 2022 Academy filled almost immediately to a class-maximum of 26 individuals, all of whom went on to achieve full

attendance throughout! The program was broken down into 8 individual courses, presented each Tuesday and Thursday evening over four weeks in February.

The goal of Citizens Academy is to provide an interactive program to educate and familiarize Town residents with the various departments and services provided by their local government. The nature of the program itself doesn't lend well to virtual instruction, as hands-on interaction and demonstration is what drives the learning. This helps to provide a deeper understanding of the "who, why, & how" government operates at the municipal level. During the time off, the entire program received a thorough revamping. This is why during the hiatus mentioned above, all presentation materials and course schedules were revised, allowing for a fresh new take from all presenters and discussion topics.

To learn more about the Citizens Academy, and receive updates on future classes, just visit the Academy's page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.com/ACADEMY, or click the link below.

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Fat Tuesday ... on a Saturday

By now it's fairly universally agreed that 2020 into 2021 was a pretty terrible time for celebrations. And no event, gathering, or holiday shouts "CELEBRATE" quite like ***Mardi Gras***.

That's why lifelong revelers and casual partiers alike rejoiced when the ***Mardi Gras by the Sea Festival & Parade*** returned in full force for 2022! One of the most celebrated happenings in the Town's [Events Calendar](#) came back stronger than ever, with even more music, fun, and floats to offer!

On Saturday, February 26, crowds lined the main thoroughfare of E Oak Island Drive to watch the Mardi Gras parade wind through town. Estimates of 2,000 spectators or more lined up in their finest shades of green, purple, and gold to join in with the 48 parade entries. Starting at SE 64th street, the parade sauntered to the soundtrack of traditional Dixieland jazz as it moved down to SE 46th street.

From there, it was just a quick turn to the craft market and live concert at Middleton Park, where even more attendees showed up to patron the 92 festival vendors available. Local band favorite **Back Porch Rockers** provided the soundtrack for the rest of the afternoon's activities, while food, crafts, and games for the kids were enjoyed by all ages.

Despite the overcast sky and low 50's temperatures, the turnout from parade entries, market vendors, and festival attendees shows encouraging promise for live events in 2022. That promise carries a renewed hope for the return of fun! "***Laissez les bons temps rouler!***"

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 [Southport-Oak Island Chambers of Commerce](#), 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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Fire Department Safety Brief: First Aid Kits

*(Contributed by the **Oak Island Fire Department**)* While the Fire Department often has to visit the houses of others, it's not often we get visitors to **our** house. That's why we considered it a great honor when, on Friday, February 11 we were visited by local Girl Scout Troop #2169. The scouts got a firsthand tour of Station #2, located at 8510 E Oak Island Dr., which houses our main training rooms and administrative facilities. They also got hands-on experience with the equipment and tools we use everyday to help save lives and protect property. As fun as those things were, the most important activity of the night was by far when we assisted the scouts in preparing their own **personal first aid kits**. Much like car insurance, umbrellas, or your favorite box of Girl Scout cookies, a personal first aid kit is not something you usually think about until you actually **need** it. However, just like all of those things, **when you do need it, you'll be glad you have it!**

While a good first aid kit should be able to help address any minor medical concern, there are several advantages to a personal first aid kit. The main one being that it can help address medical concerns specific to you as well. Personalized items such as medications, emergency phone numbers, or

other items your health-care provider may suggest, can even help others, help you in the event of your own emergency. Whether you buy a first aid kit or assemble your own, there are a few basics you need to make sure any kit has. Absorbent compress dressings, adhesive bandages of assorted sizes, adhesive cloth tape, antibiotic ointment & antiseptic wipe packets, and individually packaged pain relievers like aspirin are all great basic items to include.

If you've got a little more room in your kit, larger items such as an emergency blanket, non-latex gloves, a cold compress, and tweezers are all great items to include as well.

No matter how well-stocked your kit is, it's always important to check the contents regularly. Review the expiration dates and replace any used or out-of-date items.

Even the best first aid kits can't fully replace a call to your local paramedic when you really need it. But just like opening a fresh box of Thin Mints, they can certainly go a long way towards making a bad day hurt a little less!

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

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Beach Ambassadors Needed

(Contributed by **Skip Cox**) The **Oak Island Beach Ambassador Program** (OIBA) started in 2014 to help make residents and visitors aware of the importance of keeping our beach protected, clean and safe. Volunteer Beach Ambassadors walk sections of the beach in teams during the tourist season. They answer questions about Town amenities and events, discuss sea turtle protection, and share interesting beach information. The Ambassadors, in their identifying safety vests, also remind beach visitors about Town ordinances:

- Remove all beach gear by 8:30 PM
- Fill all holes
- Keep people, pets and gear out of, and off of, the dunes

- No glass on the beach or in beach accesses
- Keep dogs on leash 24/7 and pick up waste
- No beach bonfires May 1 to November 15

While they focus on visitor-friendly communication, Ambassadors also monitor beach activities and conditions, reporting safety and maintenance issues to appropriate Town staff and police.

OIBA is a Town of Oak Island program supported by the Beach Preservation Society, Inc. in conjunction with Town offices of Human Resources, Public Works, Code Enforcement, Public Information and Police.

Do you qualify? Ambassadors are people over 21 who apply for the program with a positive approach to the protection of the beach as well as the value of beach tourism. They are the friendly face of Oak Island's serious beach ordinances.

Applicants are subject to a background check and go through a training program before beginning their patrols at the start of the tourist season. They must have stamina, mobility and maturity.

Ambassadors are expected to commit to at least 20 hours of service in the tourist season [mid-May through Labor Day].

They report regularly to the Program Manager, and may also address concerns to designated Town personnel, including the police in extreme cases. **INTERESTED?** Contact Skip Cox, OIBA Program Manager at 910-880-0620, or by email at skipncsu@gmail.com.

To learn more about the Beach Ambassador Program, visit their page on the Beach Preservation Society Website at www.beachoki.org/beach-ambassadors, or click the link below.

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Beach Preservation Society: Online Auction

(Contributed by **Beach Preservation Society**) The Oak Island

Beach Preservation Society, Inc. (BPSI) is currently holding its primary fundraising event, the **Spring Forward for the Beach** online auction.

Beginning February 28 and ending on April 9, the auction features **200 items** waiting for your bid! Items of every type and interest are represented, from small kitchen gadgets, to massive aerial prints like the one currently on display in the Town Hall (*pictured*). Be persistent to grab the items you really want, and remember, all funds go to serve the beach!

To view and bid on items in the auction, just visit the auction page at www.32auctions.com/BPSI2022, or click the link below.

To learn more about the Beach Preservation Society, Inc. and all they do to benefit the public beach areas of Oak Island, visit their website at www.beachoki.org.

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Environmental Advisory Committee: Adopt-A-Highway Event

(Contributed by the **Environmental Advisory Committee**)

At the end of January, The Environmental Advisory Committee sponsored an **Adopt-A-Highway** (AAH) Litter Pickup Event. The first such event for 2022, it served as a kickoff to the Committee's 7th year of the AAH program! Those who participated came out on a cold morning, and braved the challenges of an initial attempt to reorganize the event due to weather.

The pickup route, established through contract with NCDOT, started at SE 59th Street through to the base of the Barbee Bridge (on the island) side.

Throughout the event, we collected a total of eight (8) bags of garbage, most of which were the 40 gallon sized bags ... **and they were full!** An additional four (4) bags of recyclable items was collected as well. These were collected with attention to the updated Brunswick County recycling guidelines.

A special thanks goes out to all who participated for their

efforts. A second event will most likely be scheduled for sometime in April.

To learn more about how you can help with future pickup events, or just get involved in general, Contact Skip Cox, AAH coordinator at 910-880-0620, or by email at skipncsu@gmail.com.

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NEWS & NOTICES:

MAPCSU

MARCH

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 regular meeting on **Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 6:00 PM** in the Council Chambers, located on the second floor of Town Hall at 4601 E Oak Island Drive.

PLANNING BOARD (televised) will hold a regular meeting on **Thursday, March 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, March 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.

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Phase II Nourishment Project Update

Shortly before sunset on Sunday, February 20, the first grains of sand came rushing through the pipeline, and the on-beach operations of the **Phase II Nourishment Project** were officially underway. Since then, the project has utilized two (2) dredge

underway. Since then, the project has utilized two (2) dredge ships and multiple lengths of pipe to move over 140,000 cubic yards of sand on the beach areas along W Beach Drive.

Originally expected to start around 6th Pl E where the Phase I project left off in 2021, the contractor made the decision to adjust the location a few days prior to the start of the project, due to forecasted conditions and the layout of the project area.

As a result of this move, sand first began moving around 51st Pl W, with work traveling east to 33rd Pl W. As of the last day in February, work had returned to 51st Pl W, and is now traveling west towards **The Point**.

Once the current work zone has been completed, it is not yet clear at this time if work will resume at 33rd Pl W and move towards the east, or start back at 6th Pl E and head west as originally intended. Several factors including weather, equipment, and project area conditions will determine that decision as the project moves forward. One thing is for certain however, ANY movement will be updated swiftly on the **Nourishment Project Information** page of the Town Website. The page has recently been updated with project completion percentages, more accurate project area maps, and live tracking of the dredge ships used. To view this page, simply visit www.OakIslandNC.gov/SAND or click the link below.

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Sidewalk Project Started

Middleton Park, located at 4610 E Dolphin Dr. is considered by many to be one of the key amenities offered by the Town of Oak Island. Centrally located in the heart of Town, this park offers something for everyone, from an entertainment venue, to playgrounds, sports fields, a splashpad, and even cornhole! In fact, the park offers so much, that the biggest challenge facing the park to date has been how to get around in it. However, throughout the month of March that's going to change, thanks to a much-welcome boost in accessibility from

the Middleton Park Sidewalk Project.

Currently underway (*pictured*), and expected to last the next 2 - 4 weeks, the project will see the installation of six foot (6') wide walkways encompassing the entire perimeter of the park. This includes the concert lawn by the amphitheater, the recreational sports fields, the playgrounds and splash pad. In addition to the perimeter walkway, a connecting walkway will also be poured in the center of the park, which divides the recreational fields from the concert lawn. More connecting walks will also be added in the pirate ship playground and splash pad areas as well.

This sidewalk project will add a new level of accessibility in and around the park; opening up its many features to those with limited mobility, and providing new opportunities for even more residents and visitors to join in on community activities.

For more information on the progress of the sidewalk installation, just visit the **PROJECTS** page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/PROJECTS or click the link below.

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Pier Springtime Hours Change

One of the most welcome signs of spring is found in the longer daytime hours afforded by Daylight Saving Time. For many, it means more time to spend outdoors doing their favorite activities such as hiking, bicycling, or enjoying nature. But for true outdoor connoisseurs (and by that, we mean **anglers**), it means more time to spend with lines in the water! Per usual, the Oak Island Pier is always one step ahead. By the time we wind our clocks forward on Sunday, March 13, 2022, the Pier will have been enjoying expanded spring hours for almost a full week!

Beginning on Monday, March 7, the Pier will be open from 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM daily.

In addition to fishing passes, you'll find the Pier House conveniently stocked with frozen bait, fishing tackle, sundries, snacks, ice cream, and drinks for purchase. Shirts, sunglasses

chocolates, ice cream, and drinks for purchase. Shirts, sunglasses, and other souvenirs are also available.

Don't forget, you can still visit the Pier anytime, *virtually* through the ***Oak Island Pier Webcam***. To view the webcam, along with full details on the Pier or Pier House, simply visit the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.com/PIER, or click the link below.

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Spring Cleaning Reminders

The sun comes out, the weather warms up, and the windows open ... all signs that spring has sprung! With the added light of longer days comes the added waste that is the result of spring cleaning.

In seasonal tradition, the Public Works department takes this opportunity to offer some reminders on how best to properly dispose of your more unconventional items. The Town of Oak Island does not offer curbside removal of brown or white goods, such as furniture or appliances. However, residents may dispose of these items at the Garbage & Recycling Convenience Site, located at 4110 Airport Road. Hours of

Operation for the Convenience site are every Wednesday from 1:00 PM - 4:30 PM, Fridays from 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM, and the FIRST Saturday of each month from 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM. Household trash, household recycling, brown goods, and white goods can also be disposed of for free at this location. Also please note, the Town will not be able to offer sea oats to the public this year.

For full details on the Convenience Site or alternative disposal options, including a full list of items accepted, visit the Site's page on the Town Website at

www.OakIslandNC.com/CONVENIENCE or click 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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Holiday Bingo

WHEN: March 14 • 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

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

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

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

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.

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"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.

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Spring Fling Craft Market & Music Festival

WHEN: Saturday, March 26, 2022 • 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM

WHEN: Saturday, March 26, 2022 • 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM

(Market) • 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (Concert)

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

COST: Free to attend (vendor fees vary)

ABOUT: It's the best way to celebrate Spring in Oak Island!

The 2022 Spring Fling includes live music and full farmers and craft artisan market. A LIVE concert featuring The Fossil Rockers will be held from 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM.

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Drive By Bunny

WHEN: April 5, 6, & 7, 2022 • 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

WHERE: Various Locations

COST: Free

ABOUT: Experience the thrill of searching for the Easter Bunny; no matter your age! Sign up your house, street, or friends to have the Easter Bunny and Friends party their way through your neighborhood. The Easter Bunny and friends will slowly drive down your road as they wave and spread seasonal cheer throughout Oak Island to family and friends.

NOTE: *Registration is required.* To register, click on the available date(s) listed in the RecDesk application at www.OakIslandNC.gov/RecDesk, or click the link below.

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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.

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DIVISION FEATURE: PUBLIC UTILITIES WATER DIVISION

Scientifically speaking, water is the most basic necessity for life. Metaphorically speaking, it's one of the most basic necessities for comparison as well. Whether you're *in hot water*, *in deep water*, feeling like *a fish out of water*, trying to *lead a horse to water (and make him drink!)*, or reminding your family that *blood is thicker than water*; this resource is so fundamental it gives us the standard by which we grade every other aspect in our daily lives. From literally sustaining life to just making our cars shiny, there's virtually no human activity where water is not involved, no matter how important or

inconsequential. With this in mind, the massive infrastructure and effort humans put into delivering that water to our homes makes perfect sense.

As stated on the [Town Website](#), the Oak Island Public Utilities Department provides water service and wastewater collection and treatment, ensuring the Town complies with all state and federal regulations. One year ago, in the March 2021 edition of [***The CURRENT***](#), we introduced you to the administration and staff of the Wastewater Division of the Public Utilities Department. Now, as we look towards another spring, and the seasonal increase in water usage that follows, it seems fit to discuss the other half of this important department, the **Water Division**.

Beyond paying a monthly bill (*more on that in [last month's edition](#)*), public awareness related to water usually doesn't extend past the Town's four (4) water towers or the tap at the kitchen sink. However, the Water Division works hard every day to provide a safe and efficient level of service across a vast network of infrastructure, all while ensuring the Town complies with all state and federal regulations. Division staff handle a wide array of responsibilities, including new tap installations, day-to-day maintenance, meter reading, service cutoffs and restorations, requests for line locations and other tasks as needed in the day-to-day operation.

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PROFILE: Water Superintendent: Tray Bivins has worked for the Town of Oak Island for as long as the Town of Oak Island has been **the Town of Oak Island**. Starting in 1999 when Long Beach & Yaupon Beach merged, he's spent 23 years serving this community. His family's move here in 1995 was, like for many, based on their love of the area.

As one of the fastest growing communities in the State's fastest growing county, the work force production and time management requirements keep Bivins on his toes, to ensure his staff can meet the growing demands.

"I truly enjoy working with my fellow employees and the public, to provide quality services to the Town's citizens and visitors." - **Tray Bivins**

While he is a long-time employee, the only thing "old school" about Bivins is his work ethic, as one of the most used

tools these days is his computer. Between submitting weekly, monthly, and yearly water reports to the state, answering e-mails from citizens & contractors, and managing staff work assignment, his job involves just as programming as it does piping.

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PROFILE: *Administrative Support Specialist:* Kim Nix is as much of a benefit to every resident as she is to the Water Division as a whole. She's the first face you'll see when entering the Public Service Building, and the first voice you'll hear when calling either the Water or Wastewater Divisions in Public Utilities.

Moving to Oak Island from Greensboro 16 years ago, she first joined Public Utilities back when the department was led by the current Town Manager, David Kelly. Since then, she has been with the department through many more transitions than just the changing of a department head. This includes the move to the Water Division's current **SENSUS** automated meter reading system, a massive undertaking which involved changing every meter on the entire island.

"Ever since I started in this position I've been extremely proud to be an employee for the Town. We all come together to serve the public and take care of our island. I believe we all take pride in what we do and that means so much to me." - Kim Nix

While the majority of the Division's staff use a wide variety of tools from wrenches to backhoes, Kim's most powerful (and most used) tool is her phone. Always on a call, she keeps tabs on the crews for service requests and emergencies, or is constantly working with a customer to answer questions or resolve service issues.

Including Tray and Kim, the Water Division of the Public Utilities Department employs about a dozen individuals to maintain the nearly 11,000 service locations in the Town.

Those service locations comprise a network of two (2) distinct

Those service locations comprise a network of two (2) distinct systems. The EAST SYSTEM, primarily constructed in 1970-1971 consists of 20 miles of PVC lines ranging in sizes from 2" to 6". The WEST SYSTEM was started in 1967 on the beach front areas, but received a major upgrade in 1977. With line sizes from 2" - 14", this system includes approximately 100 miles of pipe.



BY THE NUMBERS. With so much being done on a regular basis, it's easy to overlook the overwhelming amount of work this tight-knit staff performs. Breaking down the numbers on their yearly output however, you'd find the division performs inspection, installation, repair, and maintenance duties for a staggering 120 miles (633,600 feet) of water lines; servicing 9,200 homes, 800 fire hydrants, and 10,014 meters. In addition, the Division provides installation of an average 325 new taps per year, with an average re-location of 20 meters per year. Top that off with the inspection, repair, and maintenance of 3,300 valves per year, and you can easily see just how much hard work goes into making **things flow smoothly (all puns intended)**.

The Water Division pulls off this dizzying statistics display through heavily coordinated schedules of employee teams. Working together, staff perform a multitude of tasks that include: site visits for utility location, performing monthly cut-offs and reconnections, and providing customer checks for leaks. The Division also administers the maintenance and repair contracts for the Town's four (4) water towers. These vary in location / capacity / age at Yaupon Beach / 75,000

gallons / 1971 • SE 56th Street / 300,000 gallons / 1977 • SE 30th Street / 500,000 gallons / 1997 • Middleton Avenue / 300,000 gallons / 1977. Like any other utilities however, things don't only need attention during regular business hours. That's why the Division also rotates an on-call employee, 24 / 7 / 365 to assist with emergency operations as needed.

All of this work isn't just done to fit a certain time schedule, it's also performed to meet a certain standard as well. That standard the Division staff hold themselves to isn't just one of their own choosing, it is one that is often mandated at the state and federal levels. As stated in the Public Utilities Department Goals, the Division strives to provide a safe and efficient level of service, while ensuring the Town complies with all state and federal regulations. The most important of those regulations is ensuring **you**, the public they serve, have full access to the knowledge of the safety and operation of your local water systems. That's why the Annual Water Quality Report is made available ***right on the homepage of the Town Website***, or through direct link at www.OakIslandNC.gov/WaterReport.

If you have questions about water quality, systems infrastructure, or just have general service requests for the Water Division, you can reach them anytime during regular business hours by calling **910-201-8007**. For after-hours emergencies, just use the prompts on the voicemail at the same number. You can also contact them online through the

Contact Form on their page of the Town Website. To access the Contact Form, or just learn more about the Public Utilities Department, simply visit www.OakIslandNC.gov/PU, or click the link below.

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



PHOTO REVIEW: FEBRUARY 2022

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 only), please email the photo along with a description of the date, location, and photographer or business name to info@oakislandnc.gov.





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