

April 2023

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Review

Welcome to The CURRENT

WELCOME to the APRIL 2023 edition of THE CURRENT.

Although Spring officially began in last month, everyone in Southeast North Carolina knows that's only a date. We've had warm days since January, and still have a few cold ones left to come. In between adjusting the thermostat and washing the pollen film off your car, it can be a bit of a guessing game as we play "*what season are we doing today?*"

For SENC though, the real beauty of Spring is the two weeks or so of consistent, enjoyable weather. Before the turtles start nesting, and the summer crowds start pouring in ... and mother nature cranks up the oven heat and leaves the kitchen! But for those brief moments; "**AH, what bliss!**" Oak Island has woken up from its winter nap, and the world is once again filling with color. From the yellow Daffodils in Middleton Park to the slowly greening Cordgrass and Needlerush of the

marsh, even nature itself is putting on a display of its prettiest palette.

Some might say, it's a saying best left to Santa (*or maybe Andy Williams?*), but we think there's a case to be made for Spring truly being "***the most wonderful time of the year!***" Regardless of what you prefer, one sure bet is that Oak Islanders will still celebrate like it's a perpetual 78° and sunny! So throw on your

shades, and layer a light jacket over that swimsuit. It's time to float on down the April 2023 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 Meeting Recap

The Town Council's regular meeting on **March 14, 2023** began with Public Comments, after which was the Council Reports. Councilmember Martin reported that through the Cape Fear RPO, the Carbon Reduction Grant and others would continue to be pursued. Councilmember Bill Craft reported that the Environmental Advisory Committee would be hosting an Arbor Day Celebration on April 13, at Veterans Park. Mayor Pro Tem Bach observed the rise in recent revaluation values, and noted the need to reflect that in upcoming council decisions.

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS Council voted to appoint Ed Hardy, John McClendon, and Charles Farley to the Board of Adjustment, and Wayne Brookover and Carrie Lenzen to the Recreation Advisory Board.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS Town Manager David Kelly provided updates on the Paid Parking program, the Skatepark

Reopening event, and tree planting efforts throughout the Middleton Park Complex.

OLD BUSINESS **(1)** Consideration of the Beach Management Plan to be Submitted to the Coastal Resources Commission: Council voted to direct Moffat & Nichols to return for a special meeting (*EDIT*: now scheduled for April 13 at 6:00 PM). **(2)** Consideration of Report from UDO Audit: Council received a report and held for future discussion. **(3)** Discussion of Previously Approved Amendments for Right-of-Way Ordinances: Council voted to rescind ROW parking restrictions during Paid Parking enforcement times for areas not in the Paid Parking zone. **(4)** Discussion and Consideration of Proposed Code of Ethics: Council voted to approve. **(5)** Consideration of a Resolution In Support of Maintaining a Living Shoreline Project at Veterans Park: Council voted to approve the resolution.

NEW BUSINESS **(1)** Consideration of Recreation Center Use Agreement: Council voted to move this item to the upcoming Budget Workshops. **(2)** Consideration of a Policy to Allow Remote Participation for Members of Certain Advisory Boards: Council voted to approve this policy.

The Council then went into closed session. Upon resuming open session, Council authorized the Town Attorney to file code enforcement abatement actions against multiple parcels, after which the meeting was adjourned. To view the video, agenda, and minutes for any Town Council meeting, just visit

the **Meetings Information** page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/MEETINGS, or click the link below.

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March 20: Meeting Resumed

On Monday, March 20, at 4:00 PM Council resumed the February 13 meeting, which had previously been recessed due to time considerations.

The meeting began with a quasi-judicial hearing for a Special Use Permit for a mini-golf. Council requested, and the

Use Permit for a mini-golf. Council requested, and the applicant agreed to recess the hearing until the May 9 meeting, to allow the applicant time to amend their request. The meeting then entered closed session, after which the quasi-judicial hearing for a Special Use Permit for a hotel resumed from its February 13 recess. Councilmember Martin made a motion to move Council approve the special use permit for the hotel project, known as Boardwalk Place, WITH the following conditions:

1. The project must be built in accordance with renditions and drawings contained in Exhibit 3, with the exception that the wildlife preserve fencing can be replaced with wire instead of wood, and that the applicant will install crosswalk demarcation across E Dolphin Dr. & S Middleton Ave.
2. All assertions of the project narrative will be a condition an approval (examples include: 19 parking spaces added, a splashpad built, with public having access to all amenities except the pool & courtyard)
3. The applicant will build the infrastructure as described in Exhibit 12 as conditioned, and submit to a yearly inspection to maintain the wildlife preserve in a safe and structurally integral manner

Mayor Pro Tem John Bach added the condition that the applicant will provide a one-year warranty to the Town on infrastructure provided to support the project. Council then voted unanimously to approve the motion in a roll call vote. Full video of this meeting, and the previously recessed February 13 meeting are available on Meetings Information page of the the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/MEETINGS, or by clicking the link below.

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Skatepark Grand Reopening

Sunday, March 19, 2023 was **NOT** Saturday March 18.

However, if you didn't have a calendar and all you cared about was doing some sick kick-flips off the half pipe, then you wouldn't have guessed any different

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wouldn't have guessed any different.

After two years of planning and design, and four months of construction, the Kevin Bell Skatepark was all set to have its Grand Reopening Celebration event on Saturday, March 18 ... and then the rains came. Even so, waiting just a little more proved not a big deal for the dedicated fans, at least a couple hundred of whom came out for the rescheduled event the following day.

A ribbon cutting, live bands, food, giveaways and prizes all were part of what many called one of the most exciting opening events in years. the days events were headlined by special guest Anthony Shetler, founder of [All I Need Skateboarding](#). Much like the Kevin Bell Skatepark itself, Anthony is also a true comeback story, launching his brand and rising to success following the devastating 2008 recession.

Shetler and his accompanying crew helped to bring out the best in the future of local talent, through demonstrations of the new park features, and hosting an invitational skate tournament.

Since the park's destruction due to Hurricane Isaias in 2020, the road to rebuild has been a long and difficult journey. For dozens of skaters using the park at any given moment since though, the payoff was definitely worth the wait!

To learn more about the Kevin Bell Skatepark, the park rules, or the history, just visit the dedicated page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/SKATE or click the link below.

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Fun At The Spring Fling Festival

On **Saturday, March 25, 2023** the Spring season officially kicked off in the Town of Oak Island! Despite the blast of near-winty winds, thousands came out to celebrate as part of the ***Spring Fling Market + Music*** event.

Residents, guests, and visitors were all welcomed at Middleton Park, where attractions for families of all walks of life were in abundance. This year's event hosted 136 artisan &

me were in abundance. This year's event hosted 150 artisan & food vendors, crafts, a Kid Zone featuring bounce houses, and an outdoor concert with local band the Fossil Rockers. From the first vendor tents going up in the early morning, until the last note was played at the concert around 8:00 PM, it was a full of day music, fun, and festivities.

While the Town's Mardi Gras Festival & Parade may serve as an "*unofficial goodbye*" to Winter, the Spring Fling is a very official "*HELLO*" to Spring. It leads into a whole host of spring and summer activities. From a Drive-by Bunny to the Summer Concert Series, the Town has already started delivering on the fun for 2023!



CONTRIBUTIONS

This section features content contributed from various Town Departments, as well as the Town's municipal and non-profit partner organizations. Regular contributing 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, please reach out to the contributing organization directly.

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Fire Department Safety Brief: Our First Probationary Firefighter Graduate

(**Contributed by Lee Price**) The administration and staff of the Oak Island fire Department wish to CONGRATULATE BRAD MEDFORD (*pictured*) on his recent graduation from the Cape Fear Community College Fire Academy!

Brad is a Town resident and recently hired Firefighter. After completing his EMT courses last year, he then immediately entered the Fire Academy. He is a determined and

hardworking individual, and a shining example of the promising future for fire service in this community.

Medford was hired as one of the Town's first Probationary / Cadet Firefighters. This program has proven greatly beneficial to both the Town and recruits like Brad, giving them a chance to learn the practical application of the job while working and also attending the Academy.

While working on C-Shift in Station 1, he would also and would attend the Academy Monday - Friday, from early morning to 5:00 PM. After class, Medford would come in on his shift days and work on his assignment, where he would talk about, review, and even practice what he learned that day.

Please join the Fire Department in congratulating Brad Medford on his achievements, and the stellar contribution he continues to provide to public safety in the Town of Oak

Duke Energy: Nuclear Siren Test

(***Contributed by Karen Williams***) Duke Energy and county officials to test sirens around Brunswick Nuclear Plant. A five to 30 second test is scheduled between 10:00 AM and 11:00 AM on Wednesday, April 12. No public is action required. The outdoor warning sirens around the Brunswick Nuclear Plant will be tested between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Wednesday, April 12.

As part of our regular, quarterly testing, the 38 sirens within 10 miles of the Brunswick Nuclear Plant will sound for five to 30 seconds on April 12. To ensure they are functioning properly, it may be necessary to test some sirens more than once. Testing is performed in cooperation with emergency officials in Brunswick and New Hanover counties, who are responsible for sounding the sirens.

Because these are tests, local broadcasting stations will not interrupt regular programming to broadcast Emergency Alert System (EAS) messages. If there were ever a real emergency at the plant requiring the sirens to be sounded, local radio and

television stations would broadcast information and instructions to the public.

For more information about nuclear emergency preparedness and outdoor warning sirens, residents can visit duke-energy.com/NuclearEP.

Duke Energy Progress, a subsidiary of Duke Energy, owns nuclear, coal, natural gas, renewables and hydroelectric generation. That diverse fuel mix provides about 12,700 megawatts of owned electric capacity to approximately 1.6 million customers in a 32,000-square-mile service area of North Carolina and South Carolina. For more information, visit www.duke-energy.com or click the link below.

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Environmental Advisory Committee: Smart Yard Award

(**Contributed by David Merkle**) Is a “low maintenance yard” a SMART YARD? In the case of Paula & Darren Byerly (*pictured*), it definitely is. They set out a few years ago to make sure they carved out time to enjoy the beach, boating, and other leisure pursuits. That meant less yard maintenance time. But they still wanted an attractive yard with greenery, blooms, and local wildlife.

They were graced with an elevated lot with 10 mature live oaks and started from there. Mowing lawns didn’t fit into their picture-nor did landscaping that required a lot of attention. They started with a circular driveway in front along with a shorter pull-off driveway in the rear to accommodate a boat. In each case, a gravel surface was selected-more on that later. Several mulched bedding areas were added. The remainder of the lot was to be a mulched surface. New plantings were species native to our unique Oak Island climate that required less maintenance and less water needs.

Now to the environmental features. The gravel driveways created a surface allowing rainwater to percolate into the underlying soil instead of flowing into the street right-of-way

as did the large mulched areas of the site. (Controlling stormwater runoff is an essential ingredient of the “Smart Yard” program ... we know that pollutants from fertilizers, weed killers, pest control insecticides, etc. that flow into our street Rights-of Ways also collect road pollutants ie. oil, gas, anti-freeze, transmission and brake fluid leaks eventually find their way to our fragile waterways). Installed downspout “diverters” carried stormwater collected by gutters from their house rooftop to mulched planting beds where the rainwater could be best utilized. The ten Live Oak trees drink a lot of water that might otherwise find its way to our already polluted Intracoastal Waterway where shell fishing, sadly, is already prohibited. The Byerly’s efforts were rewarded with a Smart Yard designation.

The Smart Yard program was originated by the NC Coastal Federation as a measure that individual homeowners could

assist in anti-pollution efforts. To apply for the designation or to find out whether your yard could qualify; contact the Public Works Department at 910-201-8083, or click the link below.

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Friends of the Library: Meet the Author Event

(*Contributed by Julie Paladino*) On Saturday, April 15, 2023 at 11:00 AM, a Meet The Author event will be held with author Rose M. Jones at the Barbee Library, located at 8200 E. Oak Island Drive.

Mildred the Bird Lady. A chance encounter in a Chicago park between inquisitive 4-year-old Mary and the eccentric Mildred begins a lifelong, unconventional friendship. Despite her mother’s admonishment not to engage with Mildred, Mary finds herself drawn to the kind “Bird Lady.”

About the Author: Rose M. Jones found her passion for writing at the University of North Carolina of Pembroke where she majored in Sociology. She and her husband work together helping people in recovery from addiction, and she volunteers

as a mentor to teens and preteens who struggle with addiction. Rose is the proud mama of 6 fur babies. She was raised in snowy northern Ohio but has since immersed herself in coastal living in Wilmington, North Carolina.

ABOUT FOLSOL: The Friends of the Library Southport & Oak Island (FOLSOL) supports the mission and programs of the Margaret & James Harper, Jr. Library in Southport and the G.V. Barbee, Sr Library on Oak Island. FOLSOL is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. For more information, call **910-278-4283**, visit www.folsol.org or click the link below.

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MEETINGS, NEWS, & NOTICES

Council, Committee, & Board Meetings

REMINDER: Televised public meetings are broadcast live on OKI-TV (Spectrum Cable channel 8), as well as livestreamed on the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/MEETINGS. For a complete schedule of all upcoming Council, Committee and Board meetings, visit www.OakIslandNC.gov/CALENDAR.

TOWN COUNCIL (televised) will hold its regular meeting on **Tuesday, April 11, 2023 at 6:00 PM** in the Council Chambers,

located on the second floor of Town Hall at 4601 E Oak Island Drive.

TOWN COUNCIL (televised) will hold its **Budget Workshops** on April 13, 19, 21, 25, 28, all starting at 10:00 AM and in the Council Chambers.

TOWN COUNCIL (televised) will hold a **Special Meeting** on **Thursday, April 13, 2023** at 6:00 PM and in the Council Chambers. The purpose of this meeting will be to consider the Beach Management Plan to be Submitted to the NC Coastal Resources Commission

RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD (non-televised) will hold its regular meeting on **Monday, May 8, 2023** at 4:00 PM in the Community Center, located at 4701 E Oak Island Drive.

ABC BOARD (non-televised) will hold its regular meeting on **Tuesday, April 11, 2023** at 10:00 AM in the Oak Island ABC Store, located at 5402 E Oak Island Drive.

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (non-televised) will hold its regular meeting on **Thursday, April 20, 2023** 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 its regular meeting on **Thursday, April 20, 2023** at 10:30 AM in the Council Chambers, located on the second floor of Town Hall at 4601 E Oak Island Drive.

PAR 3 ADVISORY COMMITTEE (non-televised) will hold its regular meeting on **Friday, May 5, 2023** at 1:00 PM in the Par

3 Pro Shop, located at 4188 Vanessa Drive.

CLOSURES & HOLIDAYS

MEMORIAL DAY: Administrative Offices for the Town of Oak Island will be CLOSED on Monday, May 29, 2023 in observance of Memorial Day. Garbage & Recycling Collection will NOT be affected.

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, Beach & Water Access Locations](#), and facilities will be open as well. All holiday closure dates can be viewed in the *Holiday Calendar* on the Town Website at: www.OakIslandNC.gov/HOLIDAY.



(DON'T) Keep Your Business To Yourself

As the weather warms up, one of the more welcome sights throughout Town is the reopening of familiar businesses ... and the emergence of new ones!

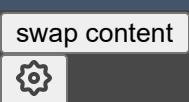
There's been a lot of changes along Oak Island Drive, as well as many other parts of Town. This can be a little confusing for those who aren't here year round to watch those changes take place, or even those who are here and just don't pay attention! One important way many residents and visitors find the goods and services they are looking for is through the **Business Directory** on the Town Website.

The Oak Island Business Directory is a great way for nearly 120 business, services, and locations to share their information for free and connect with potential customers.

One critical note, is that the Business Directory is updated by submission only. If you or someone you know owns a new or developing business, or have had some changes to your existing business, make sure to email the most updated details to INFO@oakislandnc.gov, so that they can be included in the Directory listings.

To view the Directory, or submit an entry of your own directly, just visit the Business Directory page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/BUSINESS, or click the link below.

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GovDeals Auctions END SOON

PUBLIC NOTICE: On Thursday, April 6, 2023, the Town of Oak Island placed up for auction several items of surplus equipment, through the website www.GovDeals.com.

Bidding will be active until the schedule close of the auctions at NOON on April 12.

Items placed up for auction include utility equipment and vehicles, most of which are inoperable and for parts or repair only.

All items are listed with photos and as accurate as possible descriptions. Only online bids through the GovDeals website are accepted, and prospective buyers must register with GovDeals.com to bid (registration is free).

Bidders are subject to all payment and pick-up terms as detailed with the GovDeals website. Pickup is anticipated to be available on Wednesdays from 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM, with specific details provided in each auction. All items are sold as is, where is, with no warranties of any kind expressed or implied.

View the auctions simply search the area within Oak Island at www.GovDeals.com or click the link below.

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Stormwater Innovations: Proper Planning Saves Trees & Natural Areas

(*Contributed by Rick Patterson, Stormwater Administrator*)

Many people ask how and who determines the way we calculate stormwater runoff on Oak Island. The simple answer

is the State of North Carolina (NC) and the Federal government.

Our stormwater calculations have not changed since 2008 when the State of NC mandated its twenty (20) coastal counties capture the volume of rain produced by a 1.5-inch rain event from the lot’s impervious surfaces. These impervious surfaces typically include roofs, concrete, and pavement which do not allow the rainfall to absorb into the soil’s surface. The surface of swimming pools and wooden (slotted) decking is considered pervious and not included in the calculations. This polluted runoff is simply captured on the lot, filtered (through stone and sand), and released into the soil profile. Our stormwater calculations are based solely on the volume (1.5-inch) not allowed to absorb into the soil surface because of impervious surfaces. Our stormwater calculations do not increase sizing requirements based on soil

type as our dominant soil is a (NeE-Newhan) fine sand. This is the dominant soil series on other NC barrier islands. The maximum percentage of impervious area a lot is allowed to have on Oak Island is 45%.

Innovative stormwater measures recently adapted on Oak Island include:

- Only allowing pervious materials across Town property for new driveways to help reduce street flooding.
- Allowing full infiltration credit for using alternative stormwater materials such as pervious concrete and pavers.
- Allow additional methods of capturing runoff for unique building designs and site conditions including bio-retention areas, dry wells, infiltration chambers, and stone trenches.
- Allow infiltration systems to be placed under driveways to reduce the system's footprint, save trees, natural areas, and future planting sites.
- Allow bio-retention systems to be used as alternative to or in combination with traditional stormwater systems.

The stormwater requirements for most residential homes and businesses on Oak Island today can be met 100% by placing infiltration chambers under their driveways and parking areas.

Additionally, the total footprint of the home's stormwater management system can be drastically smaller in size by reducing roof areas and using pervious materials for driveways and decks. The placement of stormwater systems under areas that will be null of vegetation allows more room for the placement of essential underground utilities (sewer,

water, electric, phone, and cable). Better underground utility placement planning will continue to be a needed service by home builders and designers as our modern homes continue to increase in size. Reducing our stormwater footprint along with using innovative materials and techniques can ensure our native plants and trees including live oaks continue to thrive on Oak Island.

To learn more about the Stormwater Department and its efforts to benefit the Town of Oak Island, just visit www.OakIslandNC.gov/STORMWATER or click the link below

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Pier Hours: EXPANDED Spring Schedule

Moving well into Spring, as the daylight hours get even longer, it allows the Oak Island Pier & Pier House to provide many anglers with even more time to enjoy their favorite place.

NOTICE: As of Monday, April 3, 2023, the Oak Island Pier & Pier House is now operating on expanded Spring hours of 6:00 AM - 9:00 PM daily.

These hours will be in place for the next few weeks, leading up to the Summer, when hours will further expand to 6:00 AM - 10:00 PM.

In addition to fishing passes, the Pier House is conveniently stocked with frozen bait, fishing tackle, sundries, snacks, ice cream, and drinks for purchase. Shirts, sunglasses and other souvenirs are also available.

For those unable to plan a visit in the near future, remember the Pier can be visited 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 dedicated page of the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/PIER 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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2023 Earth Day

WHEN: Friday, April 14, 2023 • 10:00 AM -2:00 PM

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

WHO: All Ages

COST: Free to Attend

ABOUT: Go Green this Earth Day with Oak Island Recreation Department at Middleton Park. The perfect spring break adventure; this free event will teach islanders of all ages how to protect and take care of our planet. Numerous area conservation groups will be on site with informative and interactive stations as they share a wealth of knowledge about the needs of our planet. School groups are invited and encouraged to attend. For questions, or more information, reach out to Recreation Department Director, Heather O'Brien at heather@oakislandnc.gov or call 252-678-0100.

O'Brien, at hobrien@OakIslandNC.gov or by calling 910-278-5518.

Summer Concert Series

WHEN: May 26 - September 2 • 6:20 PM

WHERE: Middleton Park Complex Amphitheater

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. The scheduled time for most concert events will be each Friday, from 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM unless otherwise noted. Full series information, concert dates, and scheduled bands are available at www.OakIslandNC.gov/CONCERT.

Ride The Tide: Community Kayak Float

WHEN: Saturday, June 3 , 2023 • Float Begins at 9:15 AM

WHERE: Recreation Center • 3003 E. Oak Island Dr. to Blue Water Point Marina

WHO: Ages 13 Years & Older

ABOUT: The Oak Island Recreation Department and Adventure Kayak Company will be sponsoring the annual Ride the Tide Community Float! This years event will consist of a 5.2 mile float from the recreation center kayak launch to Blue Water Point Marina. The Davis Canal is a calm and scenic paddle trail with the float taking place as the tide is flowing with paddlers. Come and paddle with us! For questions simply reach out to Program Supervisor, Ryan Gordon, at

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Story Time By The Sea

WHEN: June 14 • June 21 • June 28 • July 12 • July 19 •
July 26 • August 2 • August 16 • August 23 • 10:00 AM -
11:00 AM

WHERE: Oak Island Cabana • Corner of Beach Dr. and SE
46th St.

COST: FREE with Pre-registration Required

AGES: 12 years old & Under

ABOUT: Come and stop by the Oak Island Cabana for a series
and crafts arranged by the Oak Island Recreation Department.
This FREE community opportunity invites participants ages 12
& under for an morning complete with a coastal themed story
time followed by a related arts & crafts project. For questions
or more information please reach out to Program Supervisor,
Ryan Gordon, at rgordon@oakislandnc.gov or by calling (910)
278-4747. To register, visit: www.OakIslandNC.gov/RecDesk.

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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TOWN FEATURE: MIDDLETON PARK COMPLEX

As regular readers may have noticed, over the past six months the **Town Feature** section of *The CURRENT* has been highlighting some of the Town's largest and most unique recreation facilities. While having a beach, the ocean, and Intracoastal Waterway access are all initial attractions that draw people in to Oak Island, anyone who has lived here more than 5 minutes can tell you this place is **so much more**.

Recreation opportunities, the enjoyment of nature, and celebration of community aren't just priorities for Oak Islanders ... they're a way of life. Even a quick glance at the [Town Parks Directory](#) shows that it would take over a year in editions of *The CURRENT* to highlight every space provided. From water access and ballfields on the mainland ([Bill Smith Park](#)), to peaceful spaces to honor our heroes ([Veterans Park](#)),

and even parks for your pets to play ([Templeton Park](#)), we have covered it all ... except perhaps, our most important park of all.

To put it simply, things were different back in the 1980s. "Downloading music" meant pulling a box of records out of the attic. Styling your hair required Ozone-layer-depleting levels of hairspray. And "going to the park" in the Town of Long Beach? Well, that didn't exactly mean going to the Town-owned, feature-rich attraction many would expect today.

But there was a vision, some open fields, and a small playground on a lot the Town had recently started leasing from the Dowless family; which had owned the property since the late 1950s. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement, as through the lease the town paid the family's property taxes on the lot, and in the public had nearly 3/4 acre playground area in the heart of Town. when added to the Morrison Field sports area in back, SE 47th Street was a great place for parents to sit and listen to their Madonna cassette tapes, all while the kids burned out the sugar-induced energy from their Ghost Busters "Ecto Cooler" juice boxes.

In the nearly four decades since the mid-80s, a lot has changed. Just as two towns merged to create the Town of Oak Island, the little playground known as Middleton Park also merged with the rest of the area from SE 46th to SE 49th Streets. Today the nearly 17-acre space centered on the island, stands proudly as the **Middleton Park Complex**.

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PARK NAMESAKE, Ernest Felder "E.F." Middleton was often referred to as the "pioneer developer" of Oak Island; that is, the geographical island itself, NOT the modern town of the same name. In fact, when Middleton first sold his shares of the National Development Company and set out to develop this area, not even the Pre-Oak Island towns of Long Beach

and Yaupon Beach existed.

Much talk has been made of E.F. Middleton throughout the years, and his intent to make one of the most accessible beach communities on the east coast, but few know the story of **how he did it**. It was through one of the oldest, and yet also rarest types of opportunities: turning "**one man's trash into another man's treasure**."

You see, the National Development Company was interested in Brunswick County for the timber, and Mr.

Middleton facilitated their goals through timber cruising and buying of woodlands for pulp. Of all the land acquired though, they had no interest in the areas south of the Intracoastal Waterway.

Recognizing the potential, Middleton accepted his \$25,000 payment from the company in the form of *land*. As in, the whole *is-land*, from Fort Caswell to the Lockwood Folly Inlet. Subdivided lots, beach cottages, and a mile-long stretch sold to Gib Barbee that would later become Yaupon Beach, all soon following in quick fashion.

Essentially, Ernest Felder "E.F." Middleton took the discarded excess from one company, and looked beyond his own immediate paycheck, *quite literally* laying the foundations for the town where you sit reading this today.

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KEEPING IT CLEAN is a top priority. As the Town's flagship representation of recreation, the Middleton Park Complex has to always put its best foot forward.

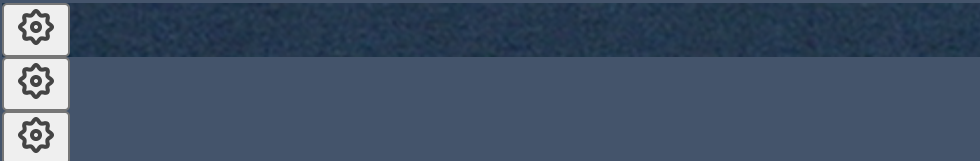
FUN FACT, most people assume park maintenance is under the "Parks & Recreation" department, but that's not exactly the case, and for good reason! Oak Island has a fantastic [Recreation Department](#). They can plan events, hire bands, and lead kayak tours with the best of 'em! however, they're not exactly "subject matter experts" when it comes to things like building fences, laying sidewalk, or grading parking lots.

That's where the hardworking staff of the [Public Works Department](#) step in. Specifically, the **Operations Division**, which if you've been following the park features in *The CURRENT* for the past six months, you may have seen pop up

a lot. This small but dedicated crew is responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of almost all of the Town's public park areas, in addition to the 67 [Beach Access Locations](#).

As the central, and by far the largest recreation space in Town, the Middleton Park Complex is actually comprised of multiple different components. These include the original Middleton Park playground on SE 47th Street beside the [Community Center](#), the Pickleball / Tennis / Basketball courts behind the Town Hall, the Oak Island Splashpad, the Pirate Ship playground, the Amphitheater, softball & intramural fields, and the newly reopened Kevin Bell Skatepark, all of which are encompassed by the recently installed perimeter walking trail.

There's a reason why so many activities are held in the Middleton Park Complex - because no other place offers such a variety of activities for each individual interest! Whether it's a Friday night concert, a morning yoga session, watching your little kids play in the Splashpad, or your older kids defy gravity on their skateboards ... it lives up to responsibility of being a central feature that provides a wide variety of recreation.



It's more than just recreation though, as the Complex also provides a central place for community gatherings. The cultural growth provided by farmers markets, festivals, and live music or art shows, serve to build the character of a community just as much as any playground or water park ever could. In many practical ways, what was an open field behind the Town Hall has been transformed into the geographical, recreational, and cultural heart of Oak Island.

Like the Island itself, the Middleton Park Complex continues to grow and change. Old features are constantly being updated, and new features are continually being planned. And while you can't always pick who your new neighbors are, or how their house will look, everyone has a say in what they see in their town's park. It's the place where everyone comes together to truly realize the mission at hand, ***providing a home for future generations to fall in love with.*** Those kids "sailing" on the Pirate Ship playground today? They're no different than the kids 40 years ago, hanging on the monkey bars of a playground on a leased 3/4 acre lot. Chances are, they're saying "***one day, if I'm lucky, I'm gonna live here!***"

As impossible as it may seem to be, if you're unfamiliar with the Middleton Park Complex, you can check it out for yourself; officially located at 4610 E Dolphin Drive, it encompasses the areas from SE 46th street to SE 49th Street, and from E Oak island Drive all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. Perimeter parking, as well as the Town's largest public parking lot are also available. Oh, and no worries during the Summer's Paid Parking season, as special events like concerts, festivals, and farmers' markets are NOT charged. Full details are also available anytime in the Parks directory on the Town Website at www.OakIslandNC.gov/PARKS.

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE



PHOTO REVIEW

Provided below are examples of the visuals seen around Town throughout the past month. This section contains officially published AND reader submitted photos. Submissions are donated and not compensated, but are properly credited in the captions below. To contribute a submission, 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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