



SUNSET BEACH *North Carolina*

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ANNUAL REPORT: 2010~2011

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Welcome to the first Town of Sunset Beach Annual Report. More than a year ago, the Town Council began discussion of a new communications plan designed to provide residents and taxpayers with more information.

A major goal of the plan was a revision of the Town web site (www.sunsetbeachnc.gov). That

was accomplished earlier this year and we hope you find it helpful.

The plan also includes a series of "town meetings" designed to share information and answer any of your questions. Town Staff and Council members are discussing the most efficient and effective ways to schedule those meetings in the near future.

This Annual Report is yet another component of the communications plan. Beginning with this issue, the Sunset Beach Town Council will issue an Annual Report each Fall. Publishing it then enables us to include the following year's budget information which is finalized in July.

This first issue is being mailed to all Sunset Beach property owners and will be posted on the Town web site. In the future, we hope to create a system that will allow recipients to designate if they would prefer to receive the Report electronically.

We hope you find this information useful and interesting. But most of all, we hope you will take the time to read the information and if you have questions or comments, that you will contact us. We and the Staff would be happy to discuss your concerns and hear any suggestions you may have to improve the Report.

Mayor & Town Council

COMPUTER IN TOWN HALL FOR CITIZENS' USE



Recognizing that not all residents have direct access to a computer, Town Council placed a computer in the lobby of Town Hall. All citizens and visitors may use the computer to access the Town web site and find interesting and helpful information. Just come to Town Hall and have a seat. Use of the computer is on a "first come, first served" basis.

Finance Director Donna Rogers tests the settings on the computer.

THE TOWN BUDGET

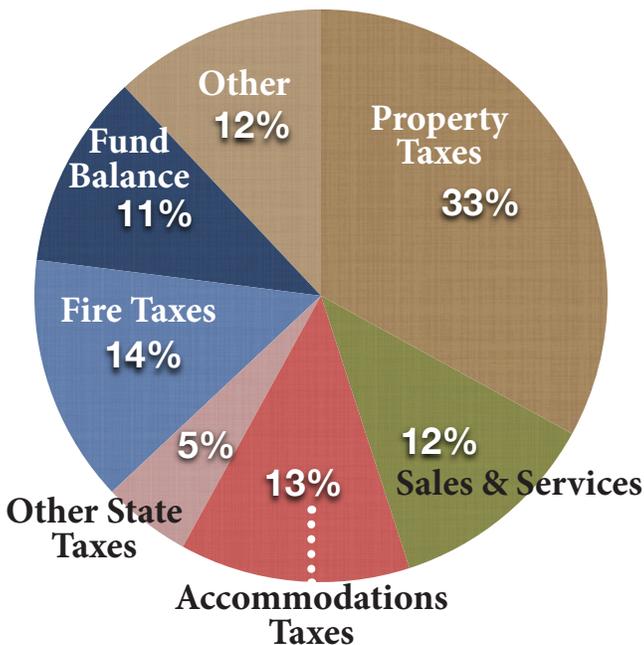
A BALANCING ACT

The Town's budget is in many ways like a family budget. Income provides the basis of any budget; expenditures are devoted to essential needs. Living within our means is a balancing act and the Town Council and Staff are responsible for maintaining that balance.

- ✓ Just as household expenses include utilities, gas for vehicles, and supplies - so does the Town's.
- ✓ You probably have a debt such as a mortgage - so does the Town on buildings and vehicles.
- ✓ You save a portion of your income for future or unexpected expenses - so does the Town.
- ✓ You invest in home improvements - so does the Town invest in repairs and property and building maintenance.

The Town budget document is forty-five (45) pages long and is available for your review at any time. As the graph (2011-2012 Revenues) shows, Town revenues come from a variety of areas. With guidance from Staff and input from citizens, Town Council constructs an annual budget based on those revenue projections.

2011 - 2012 Revenues



Included in the budget are separate fund areas, much like a family budget. The total Town budget is \$5,830,564. Of that amount, \$965,000 is designated to capital projects such as the new VIPER radios for police and fire, the new beach rest rooms, walkway repairs, etc.

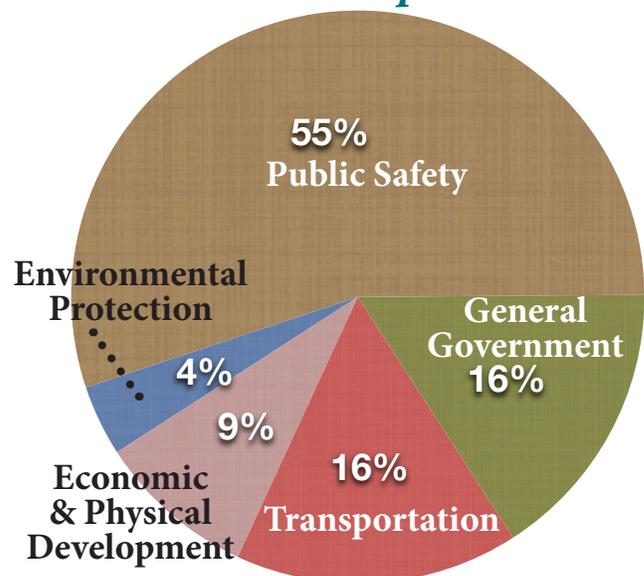
The Town Council allocates funding, including staff resources, for services to taxpayers. Town employees provide the majority of these services, which is why our largest expense – sixty (60) percent – is devoted to wages and benefits, which is typical of most municipal budgets. The other forty (40) percent is allocated to supplies, materials, and contracted services.

By function, the largest portion of the budget – fifty-five (55) percent – is devoted to public safety (police, fire, inspections).

As the Town Audit points out (*the complete Town Audit is available on the web site or can be viewed at Town Hall*), the Town's finances are in excellent condition.

Thanks to the diligence of Staff and previous Town Councils, as well as the current Council, as of the end of the summer the Town has approximately \$9,000,000 in cash reserves to fund capital improvements and to continue operating in the event of a natural catastrophe.

2011 - 2012 Expenditures



CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Just as families plan for the future, so does the Town. Since 2008, Council and Staff have relied on a five-year approach to future spending on Capital Improvement Projects to best serve the Town and its residents over the long term.

The *Sunset Beach Land Use Plan (LUP)*, available for your review on our web site, addresses future needs based on community input and lays out strategic objectives that influence Town Council decisions.

Required by every municipality, the LUP's strategic objectives are accomplished through a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) which allocates specific dollar amounts for each project in the CIP.

In the Town's 1997 LUP, and again in the 10-year update, citizens and Town officials went through a long process of developing goals to address issues such as water and sewer supply, transportation, growth management, and public access facilities; they identified several existing and emerging issues facing Sunset Beach. Among the core set of goals that emerged were the preservation of the character and density of the residential areas, implementation of a centralized sewer system, ensuring adequate open space including providing public trust areas, and increasing public access facilities (*LUP, page 113*).

Population changes also impact long-range planning. Sunset Beach's population according to the 1990 Census was 311, in the 2000 Census it reached 1,800 permanent residents, and today, in 2011, the population is more than 3,500 permanent residents. The projected population, assuming no future annexations, is expected to reach 4,613 by 2020 (*LUP, page 78*).

Street Repaving & Landscaping

In addressing the needs of a growing population, Council plans to resurface streets torn up by the sewer construction and others that are in need of resurfacing from daily wear and tear. Planning for street resurfacing needs began in 2007 and funds have been put aside annually for this purpose. Around the same time, the Council began consideration of

improvements to the stretch of Sunset Boulevard that is the gateway to the Island and the beach. A citizen committee was appointed to begin planning those improvements, and their work resulted in a concept that is under Council review. As a first step, a local citizen is working on a landscape design for a portion of those improvements. That plan will be discussed with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NC DOT) as its approval is required, and in the near future landscape and street improvements to enhance the appearance of that important Island entryway will begin.

Bike Trails

In 2007, a citizen committee was appointed to look at developing bike trails in Sunset Beach because citizens recognized the need for this important alternative to traditional transportation modes. Over a period of two to three years, this committee, with the aid of a planner from the regional Council of Governments (COG) and DOT, developed a plan adopted by the Town Council. The Council has been appropriating reserve funds for this purpose since 2007.

Fire Station #2

In 2008, the Town Council began putting aside monies for a second fire station. This important project came about in 2002 when the State Department of Insurance, in conducting its regular fire insurance rating for the Town, recommended that Sunset Beach Fire District needed a second fire station located anywhere from the Post Office to the vicinity of Georgetown Road and NC 904. In its analysis, the State reported that the main fire station was too far away from parts of the Town fire

(continued on page 6)



CHANGE ~ IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY

The past year was a busy one for the Town Council. While we can't list every change that occurred, we'd like to share some of the highlights with you.

Newly Designed Web Site

Our newly designed web site took longer than expected but the final product is one we know will serve you well. Our Town Clerk, Lisa Anglin, deserves special recognition for many hours of dedicated service to completing this project.



Let us know what you think. Send us any suggestions you have to make this new web site even better. The address is: www.sunsetbeachnc.gov.

New Parking Regulations

Perhaps one of the Town's most controversial projects, the Parking Committee's recommendations were received with mixed emotions. Many Town residents shared their feelings at two public hearings and Council members received numerous e-mails throughout the months of deliberation.

At a meeting in February (*see February 2011 Council Minutes on the web site*) some of the Committee's recommendations were adopted. Due to the on-going sewer installation and plans for the installation of bike/walking paths, consideration of other recommendations remains in abeyance.

The first season of these regulations have been challenging. As Police Chief Lisa Massey points out, "We made the best judgments we could. Our goal was to enforce the regulations while being as accommodating as possible during the sewer construction."

For a complete copy of the Committee's recommendations go to the Town web site or contact Town Hall for a copy.

Town Council intends to do a complete review of the parking changes after the summer season.

Preserving Open Space

While construction has slowed over the past few years, the threat of losing precious open space continues to challenge all communities, especially on the coastlines.

In an effort to preserve as much open space as possible, our Planning Board devoted numerous meetings to a review of Town ordinances governing this issue.

After much deliberation and meetings with local golf course representatives, the Planning Board presented its recommendations to Council. In November 2010 (*see Council Minutes on web site*) Council adopted changes to ensure minimum standards and open space on golf courses and in new communities.

Sewer Project

The Brunswick County Sewer Project continues to be a major presence in Sunset Beach. As of publication, the project is progressing on the Island and is scheduled to proceed through the beginning of 2012 (*see Sewer Schedule on the web site Home Page*). Assessment announcements are expected in 2012.

The County web site (www.brunasco.net) contains specific information about the project, time schedules, lists of plumbers & electricians

who attended County training, information about the Sunset Beach Connection Assistance Program and an application to apply, connection issues, information about connecting in the first year to avoid connection fees, and a list of *Frequently Asked Questions*. For all of this information check this link on the County web site: www.brunswickcountync.gov/Departments/Utilities/SunsetBeachWastewaterCollectionSystem.



Traffic Issues

The new Sunset Beach Bridge was dedicated on October 1, 2010 and has been well received, but there are some concerns.

Discussions with the NC Department of Transportation regarding some safety issues have already occurred and a DOT traffic study took place during the Summer of 2011. As of this printing the Town is still waiting for a report from DOT.



Photo by Irene Tolvay Dowdy

FUTURE PROJECT:

Future projects to enhance our Town are high on the Council's list for the upcoming fiscal year. Each project will be given due consideration and, assuming budgetary abilities, will be placed on a time line.

Streetscape Committee Report

The Committee's recommendations regarding future landscaping on the Island were presented to Council at its February 2011 meeting. Council then held a Special Meeting (*March 2011*) to discuss the report in detail.

As the Parking Committee recommendations were delayed because of the sewer project, the Streetscape recommendations are similarly affected; however, Council is moving forward with a plan to landscape the areas surrounding the Mannon C. Gore Bridge entrance on the mainland side. A \$15,000 landscape allocation from DOT will be used to enhance this area as quickly as possible.

Sunset Beach Pontoon Bridge Video

Sunset Beach is still a relatively young community, incorporated in 1963, but we do have our history and the Town Council is dedicated to preserving it. As part of that effort, a video entitled *The Sunset Beach Pontoon Bridge*, chronicles the building and years of service of the iconic bridge. The video can be viewed on the Town web site and copies may be purchased at Town Hall for \$4.00. The payment covers the duplication fee.



Painting by Meredith Hannon

BATHROOMS AT THE GAZEBO

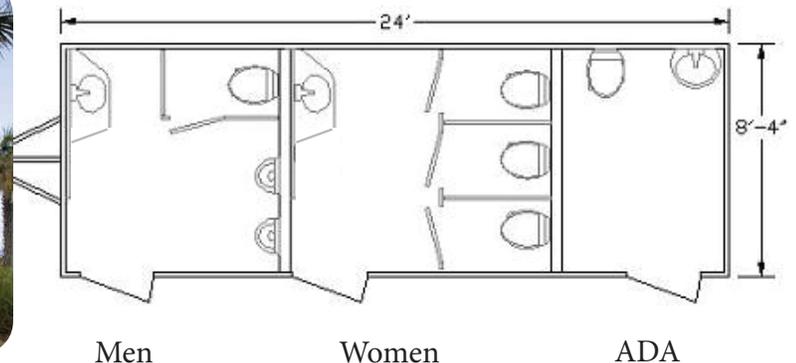
The port a-johns in the Gazebo parking lot have never been the perfect solution ~ but good news is here!

After investigation by Council and Public Works Superintendent Dustin Graham, we are planning to install a much better system upon completion of the sewer project.

If you travel to Myrtle Beach, you can see the type of bathrooms Council is planning to purchase.

They include sinks, running water, flushing toilets, handicapped access, heat, and air conditioning. Installing this system will cost less than half the original plan of a building with bathroom facilities and will allow our Public Works Staff to move the facility in case of hurricane threats.

Our time line is that these facilities will be on the beach for the 2012 Season.



The photo above is not the exact facility we will have, but it shows the set-up. The facility will sit on the ground and have a handicap ramp. The schematic shows the exact interior of the facility that will replace the port a-johns.

WHAT IS "REVENUE NEUTRAL"???

Every four years Brunswick County “revalues” our property. The recent revaluation caused a decrease in the overall value of properties in the County and in Sunset Beach.

Therefore, the amount of money generated by the tax rate would be lower and that meant less money in government coffers.

Since property taxes are the major source of revenue, the County and Sunset Beach had to address this new challenge. The choices were: raise the property tax rate

to the level where the total revenues produced would equal the total revenues produced when property values were higher, i.e., revenue neutral, or find a lower tax rate that would still allow government to function.

While the County opted for a revenue neutral tax rate of 44.25¢ per \$100, Sunset Beach increased the rate only 1½¢ from 9¢ to 10.5¢ per \$100. A revenue neutral rate would be 12.5¢. (See *sample tax bill below*) Even though the Sunset Beach tax rate increased, **the actual cost to taxpayers declined in real dollars.**

Fiscal Year 2010			Fiscal Year 2011		
Total Taxable Value of Your Home: \$313,060			Total Taxable Value of Your Home: \$255,030		
TAXING DISTRICT	RATE PER \$100 VALUE	AMOUNT DUE	TAXING DISTRICT	RATE PER \$100 VALUE	AMOUNT DUE
Brunswick County	0.3050	\$954.83	Brunswick County	0.4425	\$1128.51
Sunset Beach	0.0900	\$281.75	Sunset Beach	0.1050	\$267.78
Sunset Beach Fire Fee		\$200.00	Sunset Beach Fire Fee		\$200.00
TOTAL DUE		\$1,436.58	TOTAL DUE		\$1,596.29

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS (continued from page 3)

district to meet public safety requirements. To ensure the safety of all areas of the fire district and to improve response time, planning for the second fire station began. In 2009 the Town was awarded a federal grant that grant covers eighty-five (85) percent of the project costs.

Town Park & Boat Ramp

The Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) requires that one of the goals of our *Land Use Plan* be to seek to maximize and maintain public access to the beaches

and public trust waters in Sunset Beach (*LUP, page 102*). The acquisition of and future development of the tract of land on the Intracoastal Waterway, plus the soon to be developed boat launching site across the road from it, fit within these goals.

When all of these projects are completed any future projects are likely to be of a more modest nature, especially given that new annexation laws restrict the Town’s future growth.

GRANTS AWARDED TO SUNSET BEACH

FIRE STATION #2	\$1,500,000
TOWN PARK	550,000
BOAT RAMP	1,350,000
TOWN HALL HURRICANE SHUTTERS	80,000
TOTAL	\$3,480,000

TOWN SERVICES

A GOOD VALUE FOR YOUR TAX DOLLARS

Ever wonder exactly how your tax dollars are spent? You're already thinking, "of course I think about it – only every day!" Well, your Town Council does as well and that's why we want to provide you with some information about that.

Police & Fire account for 48¢ of each dollar.

Infrastructure (streets, bike paths, beach rest rooms and walkways) account for 31¢ of every dollar.

Administration, including the governing body, administration, and finance account for 10¢.

Planning and development services account for 6¢, and **environmental protection** and miscellaneous services account for 5¢ of every dollar.

MAJOR TOWN SERVICES

POLICE - 24%

FIRE - 24%

INFRASTRUCTURE - 31%

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES - 6%

ENVIRONMENTAL & HUMAN SERVICES - 5%

ADMINISTRATION - 10%

FUTURE PARK & BOAT RAMP

A vote to purchase 5.2 acres of land on the Intracoastal Waterway set in motion plans for a future Town park. While there is no specific design plan as yet, the property with 1,200 feet of waterfront on the Waterway and Mary's Creek, lend themselves to a host of approaches. The final cost to the Town, thanks to a reduction in the purchase price and grants, is \$2.1 million. This acquisition helps the Town meet the CAMA requirements of our LUP.

Situated on a prominent point along the Intracoastal near the old Sunset Beach pontoon swing bridge site, the park will afford beautiful views of the Waterway and nearby marshes, as well as a barrier island. The majority of the site is open grassed areas with many large live oak trees.

Town Council will be seeking input from residents in the coming months, but tentative plans include a pier on the Waterway along with two overlooks that extend to the shoreline, a small, grassed amphitheater or gazebo, a veterans' memorial, rest rooms, benches, and a walking trail.

Adjacent to the park will be a public boat ramp in the Right-of-Way (ROW) of the road leading to the old pontoon bridge site. The North Carolina Water Resources Commission (WRC), which will construct and operate the boat ramp, has submitted a preliminary design of the facility. WRC will be responsible for all structural repairs, resurfacing and

pothole repairs, and dredging as part of its ninety-nine (99) year lease. The Town will be responsible for mowing the grass, litter pick-up, and emptying trash receptacles.

These two projects address a long-standing State and local goal of providing more public access to the State's waters as outlined in our *Land Use Plan*.

Forming this partnership with the State and County preserves two pieces of the fast-disappearing land on the Waterway and allows Sunset Beach to provide public water access and two relaxing environments for its residents. These projects preserve beautiful natural settings – including the hundred-year-old oak trees – in perpetuity and prevent residential or commercial development of these unique pieces of land in Sunset Beach.



One view from future park.

CONTACT US

HOW TO REACH TOWN HALL & COUNCIL MEMBERS

Town Hall: 579-6297 or 579-3808
Inspections Department: 579-0068 or 579-0075
Police Department (non-emergency): 579-2151
Fire Department (non-emergency): 579-2456
General e-mail: sunsetbeach@atmc.net

Gary Parker, Town Administrator
Lisa Anglin, Town Clerk
Donna Rogers, Finance Director
Dustin Graham, Public Works Superintendent
Sandy Wood, Inspections Department Head
Lisa Massey, Police Chief
Chris Barbee, Fire Chief

Mayor Ronald Klein ~ 910-579-1354 ~ rmklein@atmc.net

Mayor Pro-Tem Lou DeVita ~ 910-579-2780 ~
deesatplay@atmc.net

Councilman Bob Bobinski ~ 910-579-3333 ~
bobbobinski@atmc.net

Councilwoman Karen Joseph ~ 910-579-4891 ~
kjoseph@atmc.net

Councilwoman Carol Scott ~ 910-579-9104 ~
ckscott13@gmail.com

Councilman Wilson Sherrill ~ 910-575-3083 ~
wilsonsherrill@hotmail.com

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