



Town Manager Tim Holloman; Town Attorney Steve Coggins; Commissioner Linda Stipe; Commissioner Tom Eggleston; Mayor Howard Braxton; Commissioner Morton Blanchard; Commissioner Larry Combs; Commissioner Julian Bone

HOW ARE WE DOING ON OUR PRIORITIES?

It is now time to see what progress has been made on the year's priorities itemized in the spring issue of *Topsail Tides*. These priorities were identified at the Annual Town Board Retreat in January and were based on input by the Mayor, Town Manager, Commissioners, Citizens and Property Owners. One or more Commissioners volunteered to be the "Champion" for each priority. Listed below are the priorities, the Champions for each, and the progress that has been made.

Ensure reserves remain intact for engineering, inlet dredging, and putting sand on the beach (the "Thirty Year Plan")

Champions: Julian Bone, Larry Combs

In early October, The State of North Carolina guaranteed the funding that had been requested for the continuation of the "30 Year Project." The erosion control project, which will again place sand on the entire beach front, began in early November and should be completed in March. The approximately 850,000 cubic yards of sand that will be placed along the entire beachfront will come from the inlet, the outer bar, and the navigation channels of the sound. Of course one of the major benefits of this project, in addition to the protection it offers to our beach front, is the widening and deepening of the inlet, which is crucial to our boaters. All oceanfront property easements procured for the original project remain valid for the entire 30 years, so that will not be an issue with this phase of the project.

Stay abreast of insurance changes (homeowner's, flood, and employee health)

Champions: Howard Braxton, Julian Bone

Since our flood insurance is provided by a federal program, there is not a whole lot we can do to
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control it. For our homeowner's insurance, the path of least resistance is the NC Joint Underwriters program ("the Beach Plan"). Representative Paul Tine of Dare County, an insurance agent himself, has a Bill that has passed the House and will be put before the Senate soon that will require insurance rates to be based on actuarial data. This data includes areas such as Raleigh and Charlotte, which have received massive damage from storms in the past, and therefore should take much of the burden away from coastal areas. Our Representative, Chris Millis, is working with Rep. Tine on this change. Resolutions have been sent in opposition to rate increases. [See also the Wayne Goodwin, Insurance Commissioner article on page 19]

Insurance for our employees is provided by the League of Municipalities. Employee health insurance is one of the greatest costs that the town has, and we are doing everything we can to have the best insurance possible that is affordable.

Long range strategic planning (justify increased positions - comprehensive review of space and equipment, review of all department long range needs)

Champions: Town Manager and Management Team

Although the Town has paid Pender County to help with building inspections for several years rather than paying a full time building inspector, due to the current increases in building, it was necessary for the Town to hire a part time building inspector to handle the workload.

The Planning Board, with the help of the Cape Fear Council of Governments, has been continuing work on the CAMA Land Use Plan. This plan, reviewed every five years, updates population figures, and is meant as a guide to help protect and preserve the things we all love about Topsail Beach.

Many aspects of a long range strategic plan have been worked on in bits and pieces, but they have not yet been compiled into a complete comprehensive document to give direction to the Town. The new water system, the Parks and Recreation program, plans for all Town departments (police, fire, public works, etc.), and capital projects such as a schedule for street paving, beach and inlet maintenance should all be included in the plan. Although many towns hire a consultant for this, Topsail Beach has not done that yet. We are about 30% along with the plan as a whole.

Implement Town Center Plan

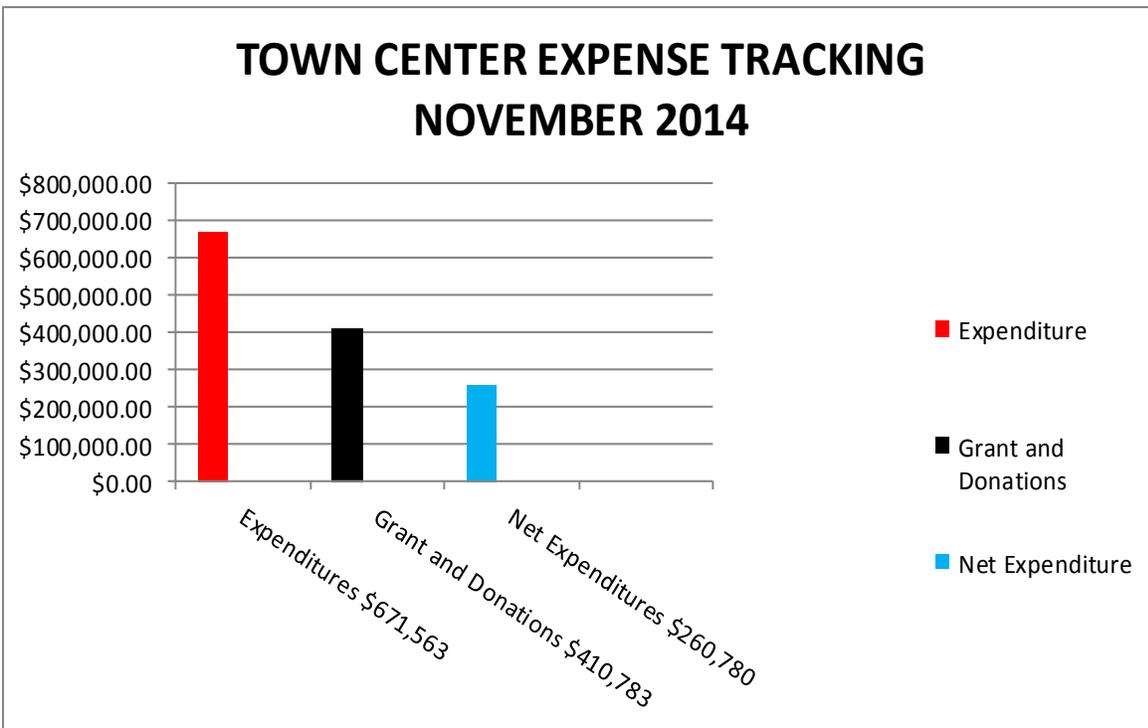
Champions: Linda Stipe, Tom Eggleston, Parks and Recreation Committee

The Topsail Beach Town Center has had several milestones since July when the playground and parking opened. The bathroom facilities opened on October 11th with a big test from about 250 plus runners and walkers for the Two Town Half Marathon. And on November 11th, the Town had its very first Veterans Day Flag Raising at 11:00 am with the Cub Scouts from Pack 270 raising the American, North Carolina and Topsail Beach flags.

At the November Board meeting the Town Board approved IMC, Inc. to complete the second phase of the Town Center with two shelters, more walks and a half basketball court. The work will began in January and hopefully will be completed before Easter and the return of residents and visitors. There will be temporary landscaping around the bathrooms for the 2015 vacation season, but the final phase 3 cleanup and landscaping may not be completed until later.

Total net expenditures so far for the Town Center are \$260,780. When the project is completed, the Town will have approximately \$335,000 invested in the entire project. This means that for every \$1 spent, the Town has leveraged \$2.62 dollars return on investment through donations and grant funding. The total net cost for phase 2 is \$76,350.

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If you are interested in making a donation, there are still opportunities available. Check with Town Hall or look on www.topsailbeach.org to see opportunities for contributing to the Center.

The Town has been pursuing a Town Center facility for over 10 years.

Bush Marina, Turtle Hospital

Champions: Tom Eggleston, Howard Braxton, Larry Combs

The Board plans to be more diligent in budgeting for maintenance for the marina as well as other town owned assets. Several parties have expressed interest in leasing the marina; however, the town is confined by the terms of the state grant that was used to purchase the marina, as well as by the wants and needs of residents and visitors. The marina must remain open and available to the citizens of Topsail Beach, and any lease or other arrangement would have to be a public/private partnership.

The former Turtle Hospital, which was in dire shape after years of dampness resulting in mold and mildew, has been stabilized, waterproofed and weathered in. The mold has been removed and the building has been declared structurally sound. Still, to be usable, the building needs to be rewired, and the dock and seawall need to be replaced...all expensive undertakings. At this time, there have been no reasonable offers on the property. The Planning Board is investigating all town owned properties, and no decisions will be made regarding the Turtle Hospital until a final report and recommendation is received from the Planning Board regarding the building's value and potential use.

Maintenance facility for storage and repairs of town owned equipment

Champions: Julian Bone, Morton Blanchard

The town continues to investigate options for storage of town owned equipment. Options are still being explored.

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Improve communications with residents and non-resident property owners (Newsletters, website, town hall meeting room, email)

Champion: Morton Blanchard

There are several citizen volunteers on this committee. This newsletter is their second one of the year, and it is expected that this will be a continuing effort with newsletters issued two or three times each year.

The committee has also discussed ways to improve the email notifications sent out by the Town, and has addressed some issues with the software system used for videoing town meetings. Currently, Town meetings can be viewed on the Town's website at www.topsailbeach.org (click on "Agendas and Minutes" under the "Government" heading).

"Please remember you can always view past and live meetings of the commissioners' board meetings on on-line which can be accessed through the Town's website. All commissioners are striving to make the best decisions for the Town. Please continue to contact us all." - Morton Blanchard

Review Personnel Policy

Champions: Linda Stipe, Tom Eggleston

As a new commissioner, Mr. Eggleston especially wanted to review the current personnel policy. He had talked with managers of other towns and saw discrepancies in their policies and wanted to make comparisons to see if there was anything in our current policy that could be improved upon. He feels it is very important to have "happy employees." After review of the policy by both Champions, no changes were made to our current policy.

Maintain adequate beach and sound access

Champions: Howard Braxton, Morton Blanchard

All ocean accesses have been looked at carefully to see what needs to be done to make them safer. This committee recognizes the need to stay within budget, so at this point only minor repairs will be done, such as replacing handrails rather than replacing entire crossovers.

A grant has been received to make the Darden Avenue Sound Access more usable. The seawall has been replaced and there is a landing and steps to the water. This work began in December and has been completed. Additionally, in 2013 the Walker Family donated an Ocean Front Lot to the Town next to the existing Darden Avenue Beach Access. The Town successfully sought and was awarded a grant to build a new handicapped accessible access with an observation deck, rinse station and expanded parking with landscaping. There is also flexibility to add additional parking in the future if needed. The total project benefit is \$61,552 with the Town's match being only \$15,131. With the new Sound Access this street will have a complete Ocean to Sound Access allowing easier use of the Beach and the Sound in this area. This is the second of 21 beach accesses to be redone. The Town did add a new handicap accessible access in 2011 at Catherine Avenue. In the summer of 2014 an assessment of all beach accesses was completed. Commissioner Morton Blanchard worked with staff to identify areas needing improvement and prioritizing those needs into a long term action plan.

GET TO KNOW TOWN EMPLOYEES: an interview with Connie Forand

Walk into Town Hall on any week day and one of the smiling faces you'll see is that of long time employee Connie Forand. Connie currently holds the titles of Finance Officer, Tax Collector, and Assistant Town Clerk and handles all the financial functions for the Town operations, including assisting the town manager with the budget preparation, tax collections, and insurance. Asked if the town was in good financial position right now, of course she said yes. She added that the Town is "cautious at all times" and she looks over every aspect of the finances and banking on a daily basis.

A native of Pender County, Connie graduated from Topsail High School, studied business at Cape Fear College and lived almost her whole life in the area. Connie worked as Town Clerk for Surf City for seven years, then went to work for the Town of Holly Ridge as their first Housing Manager and Assistant Town Clerk.



Connie Forand

Connie and her husband Bob followed job opportunities in Raleigh in the mid-1980s, where she worked for the City of Raleigh as Administrative Assistant to the Chief Engineer. But family obligations of aging parents and a Wilmington job opportunity for Bob brought them back home in a couple of years.

Upon returning, Connie became Office Manager for Ward Realty Company, but missed local government, so in 1986 when she heard there was an opening for Water Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk in Topsail Beach, she jumped at the chance. Topsail Beach did not have a Town Manager at that time and she was hired by then Mayor Kip Oppegaard and the Board of Commissioners. The only other person working in Town Hall was former Town Clerk Stephanie Rivenbark.

Twelve years later, Connie moved to the Police Department, being the first person to hold the title of Administrative Assistant to the Police Chief. In 2004, she moved back next door as Administrative Assistant to the Town Manager, taking over accounting duties. Besides her current titles, in her 28 years with the Town, she has also been CAMA Officer, Insurance Administrator, and Administrative Assistant to the Building Inspector.

Asked about memorable moments at Topsail, Connie, who has a December 25th birthday, enthusiastically said she loves the festivities at Christmas, including the Christmas Tree lighting and the parade. She likes to participate in the parade, whether as Mrs. Claus, dressed as a Pizza (she works part time at Max's Pizza in Surf City) or as a Christmas Star. Her grandchildren frequently accompany her on whatever float she is riding. She also spoke fondly of Christmas oyster roasts for town employees hosted by Postmistress Doris and Sonny Jenkins, and fun times with departed friends Rev. Ed Johnston, Anne Kerr and Dot Hargrove who loved to honor town employees during Thanksgiving.

One scary memory occurred riding on the Police boat during the Christmas Flotilla. What started out as a nice boat ride ended up in a terrible lightning storm and the temperature dropped dramatically. As Connie tried to keep her feet warm and her brand new shoes dry by resting them on the boat's generator, the two Police Officers on board noticed a strange odor. Melting shoe soles nearly started a fire on the boat. Connie enjoys Autumn with Topsail, and she was really proud of the 50th anniversary celebration in 2013, where "everyone had a great time and the fireworks were magnificent! The town employees and the community worked really hard on that."

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Connie also has vivid memories of the aftermath of Hurricanes Bonnie and Fran. "Those storms will never be forgotten," she said. "Our beach was like an atomic bomb site." Eric Peterson was Town Manager then, and she spoke of how wise it was of him to arrange for the town employees to come to the beach before residents were allowed back on the island. They rode down the beach strand in four-wheel drives all the way from Surf City because the road was blocked by houses. Just seeing the damage made her "deathly sick." She was glad she had a couple of days to put her emotions in check before residents were allowed back on the island and she had to get back to business without being too upset to deal with other people's emotions. "We had already done our grieving, so we could be strong when the property owners arrived; we all became closer during that time of mixed emotions, prayers and gladness."

Connie's husband Bob works for Pender County Utilities. She has two children, Tammie and Bryan, and two grandchildren, Morgan and Bryson. They all live nearby and she enjoys spending time with them. They attend Blake's Chapel Advent Christian Church where Connie loves to sing in the choir.

Daughter Tammie was Administrative Assistant at the Topsail Police Department for several years. In March of 2012, Tammie suffered a near fatal brain aneurysm. After several surgeries and much prayer, she is back to normal. "She is a miracle. God never left our side", Connie says and she is appreciative of generous townspeople who donated money for expenses so she could be with Tammie during much of her hospital stay. The event changed their lives and Tammie wanted to "give back". She has done so by becoming an advocate for education about aneurysms, was instrumental in North Carolina becoming a member of the Brain Aneurysm Foundation and making the month of September Brain Aneurysm Month.

Connie enjoys her work, and likes being around people. "If there's anything I want the townspeople to know about me or my job, it's that I try to treat people the way I want to be treated. I always try to keep a smile on my face, because you never know what someone is going through. Just a smile or a laugh might brighten someone's day, and it might just brighten mine too. I do love the Town of Topsail Beach and the people in it."

DREDGING & BEACH NOURISHMENT: BACKBONES OF OUR ISLAND LIFESTYLE

*This is the first in a series of **Topsail Tides** articles that will summarize the history of efforts to maintain and protect Topsail Beach's beachfront and waterways. They trace the various specific projects the Town has undertaken and is pursuing, their current status, and how they are managed and financed. In these articles, we will attempt to describe the web of governmental bodies and agencies and their requirements, at many levels, that influence Topsail Beach's dredging and nourishment efforts.*

PART I Basic "Whats" & "Whys"

At its simplest, Dredging and Beach Nourishment are opposite sides of the same coin. Both:

- Move sand from one place to another
- Involve detailed planning, engineering, and permitting
- Require specialized expertise and heavy machinery in limited availability
- Are quite expensive

However;

- Dredging removes sand from somewhere it's unwanted (storm buildup in our inlet and navigable channels), and puts it somewhere else.
- Beach Nourishment takes sand from where it's available and puts it on our beach to rebuild it from gradual erosion and storm loss.

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Why bother with either one? There are those who advocate letting nature take its course moving sand from place to place – sometimes over long cycles of many years, other times moving it suddenly and dramatically with hurricanes and lesser storms. But this ignores history and the growth of our coastal economy.

A Short Early History

After the end of World War II and the conclusion of the navy’s Project Bumblebee rocketry experiments here, followed by Hurricane Hazel just a few years later, nearly-barren Topsail Island sprang to life, especially its southern part. The few summer-only beach cottages multiplied, owners and renters alike drawn by great fishing from the several commercial piers and in the surf of the pristine beach. Weekenders from nearby towns soon were joined by many more from further inland as Interstate 40’s construction progressed from Raleigh toward Wilmington. Topsail Beach became a combined tourist and retiree community due to its family beach and friendly waters.

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACE or “the Corps”) does the dredging needed to maintain the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) as a federal responsibility supporting commercial, recreational, and military transportation. During these Topsail Beach growth years, ACE also used its “sidecast” dredges to clean sand build-up from North Carolina’s several shallow-draft inlets (used primarily for recreational and commercial fishing) and feeder channels, including our New Topsail Inlet. These small dredges can dig modest channels that are deep enough for most boats and small commercial vessels, but are prone to quick reshaling because the dredged sand is thrown overboard only a few yards outside the channel being dug.

The Corps did this work as time, equipment, and federal funds were available. North Carolina’s coastal Congressmen adeptly built funding earmarks for it into a variety of other appropriation bills.

As the attraction and accessibility of Topsail Island grew, by the late 1980s the economic significance of the beach strand itself became more evident and important. Though it had been a relatively benign period for damaging hurricanes, a series of nor’easter storms had taken much of the beach. A means to widen the beach artificially for both recreation and storm protection [called “**nourishment**” or sometimes “**renourishment**”], gained attention and study by Topsail Beach officials.

Ultimately, in 1990 the Town signed onto the initial stages of a well-established Federal program commonly known as the 50 Year Hurricane Protection Program, which Carolina and Wrightsville Beaches had adopted several years before.

What is the Federal 50 Year Hurricane Protection Program?

The **Federal 50 Year Hurricane Protection Program** (West Onslow Beach Project) defines a unique project for each participating coastal community. It has two major phases; both use sand dredged from offshore:

- **Construction** phase: Significantly widens the community’s protective dune and builds its beach seaward to a particular shape engineered to minimize storm surge and wave damage from hurricanes.
- **Maintenance** phase: Nourishes the beach with sand to maintain that “engineered beach” shape, as needed, for 50 years.

ACE engineers and administers both phases. The cost is shared with the community, but paid for primarily with federal funds. The federal incentive is to reduce the damage costs of hurricanes and lesser storms; while also providing various recreational benefits.

A Shaky Start, then Efforts Reorganized

Locally this program came to be referred to as our “**Federal Project**” or “**50-year Project.**” By 1992, the preliminary studies and design activities were completed, but the Town decided not to sign the agreement that would have allowed the project to proceed into its more detailed phases.

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Hurricanes Fran and Floyd (1996 and 1999) sparked renewed local interest in storm damage prevention. Along with adopting new stronger building codes, in 2000 Topsail Beach asked ACE to re-evaluate and update our shelved Federal 50 Year Project, a major task which required thousands of volunteer citizen and Corps man-hours over the next 14 years. In June 2014 The Topsail Beach Federal 50 Year Project finally was authorized by Congress and the President. It now awaits funding of its federal share in some future federal budget cycle (2016 earliest).

Topsail Beach appears to be well-positioned in the competitive funding queue with other communities having similar authorized 50 year Federal Projects. The technical 'heavy lifting' has been done. The task of our town officials now is to keep recognition of our Project high on that list and to maintain our eligibility.

A future Topsail Tides article will describe the design, management, and costs of the Topsail Beach Federal Project.

Other Nourishment Projects

Four years ago, because neither a presidential authorization nor congressional funding for the 50-Year Federal Project could be assured, or when, the Town concluded that while waiting to work through its bureaucratic hurdles, our homes and beach were unacceptably threatened.

Since that time, Town officials and well-versed citizens working together have undertaken three other interrelated but less comprehensive projects, each focused strictly on erosion control of our beach. One is complete, one is in progress, and one is ongoing. All are based on the "engineered beach" design concept of the Federal Project (just not as extensively). Like all beach nourishment, the physical work of spreading the sand on the beach must be done between late fall and early spring, when sea turtle nesting is inactive.

Winter-Spring 2011: Emergency Interim Beach Nourishment Project ["Interim Project"]

This was a major one-time project to rebuild significant portions of the beach after another series of damaging storms. It was novel in its engineering, because the needed sand was dredged from inshore areas of surplus rather than from offshore. Topsail Inlet and certain major channels behind the Island provided some sand, but much was reclaimed from spoil islands created in the marsh bordering the ICW when it was dug many years before. The nourishment sand was dug by a large commercial "pipeline dredge," which pumped it up the Sound through several miles of flexible pipeline, then across the Island to the beach. There it was distributed through a network of beach pipelines and discharged at the needy spots. A team of large bulldozers then spread, smoothed, and tapered the new sand to the profile defined in the project specifications.



2011 Beach Nourishment Project

The success of the Interim Project's use of inshore sand became an example for planning the **30-Year Program** that commenced immediately thereafter.

2011 – 2041: Topsail Beach 30-Year Erosion Control Program ["30-Year Project"]

This is an ongoing program, implemented by the Town as a bridge to the Federal 50-Year Project and
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designed as a stripped-down version of it. Its purpose is to plan a series of periodic projects to keep the beach nourished to engineered-beach specifications and criteria for the Federal Project, but without its hurricane damage control features. It's a way to hold our own until the Topsail Beach Federal Project is funded, which then can replace it.

It also incorporates several additional features which meet Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA) criteria to classify our engineered beach as a town asset. This makes it eligible for repair funding after certain types of storms.

Like the Emergency Interim Project, our 30-Year Program uses inshore sand sources, and capitalizes on Topsail Inlet's nature as a strong sand collector to furnish the sand for periodic nourishment of the beach, using commercial pipeline dredging.

By dredging the Inlet and its feeder channels significantly wider and deeper than traditional sidecast dredging can, or than the boats using them need, we can lengthen the time between needed beach nourishment projects. Chris Gibson, the consulting coastal engineer retained to design and manage the Town's dredging and nourishment projects, has determined we can maintain a 4-5 year nourishment cycle. These oversize channels will hold enough accumulating sand to remain usable that long before getting too shallow, then when re-dredged and pumped back on the beach will be enough to nourish it for the next 4-5 year cycle.

Dredging and beach nourishment projects have a very high "mobilization" cost – the part of a contract's total cost just to get the equipment here, deployed, and ready to start work. The longer the nourishment cycle, the less often the mobilization cost is incurred. This also gives more time to accumulate the funds to pay the next cycle's cost. The 30-year Program anticipates no federal contributions, especially with the recent elimination of congressional earmarks.

Many coastal towns are intrigued by the concept of our 30-Year Project, which is gaining recognition as a model for other communities' action. As its pioneer, it also improves Topsail Beach's prospects for stronger state funding, to supplement local sources and the portion of our town taxes dedicated to it

The two projects above will be described further in future articles. The third project is in progress, and will be finished before the next Topsail Tides is published, so is outlined more completely below, now.

2012 – 2013 & Fall 2014 – Winter 2015: Hurricane Irene Project ["FEMA Project"; "Fall 2014 Project", or currently just "The Fall Project"]



Chris Gibson, TI Coastal Engineering explains the Fall Navigation and 2nd Phase Hurricane Irene project to Congressman David Rouzer and NC Representative Chris Millis.

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By implementing the 30 Year Project, thereby maintaining an engineered beach, we also qualify as a “FEMA Beach.” In case of damage from a National Weather Service Federally Declared disaster, FEMA will pay the costs of restoring the beach to its pre-storm condition.

The northern half of the damage from Hurricane Irene in 2011 was restored in 2012 - 2013, from the Surf City town line south to Queen’s Grant. The remainder had been planned for last winter, but was preempted by permitting difficulties and the diversion of commercial dredging equipment to Hurricane Sandy recovery areas.

The Fall Project started in mid-November 2014, but enlarged significantly from just what would be needed to rebuild the remaining portions damaged by Irene, from Queen’s Grant south, paid for by FEMA. By capitalizing on not having to duplicate sometime later the mobilization needed for that FEMA-paid work, the project was expanded into the larger volume of dredging and nourishment needed to start the next full cycle of the 30-Year Project, including adding sand to the northern section done in 2012.

The work is being done by Norfolk Dredging Co. Their mobilization started in early November 2014, with the arrival of a convoy of tugboats, barges, floating cranes, bulldozers, and thousands of feet of 3-foot diameter rubber pipe to carry the sand from where it would be dredged to where it would be spread on the beach. As this material was being deployed, the large ocean-going dredge “Charleston” was headed here, arriving the day before Thanksgiving. She took station at the entrance to Topsail Inlet, hooked to the seaward end of the pipe, and began clearing sand from the designed location for the inlet’s channel through the shallows of the “outer bar,” pumping it onto the beach to the bulldozers waiting to spread it.

As each portion of the beach is nourished back to its prescribed engineered-beach shape, another section is added to the pipe, extending its outlet several hundred feet northward up the beach. This process continues non-stop, day and night.

Charleston’s channel through the inlet’s outer bar is big: 16 -18 feet deep at low tide, 150 feet wide at the bottom, tapering out to about 200 feet wide at the top, depending on the depth of cut needed to achieve that water depth at low tide. She was an impressive sight working off Serenity Point, even having been mistaken for a navy ship approaching our inlet! Her powerful engines and 16,000 horsepower pumps burn 10,000 gallons of diesel fuel per day, and it takes 157,000 gallons to fill her tanks. She cost \$50 million to build, the largest dredge ever used for Topsail Island projects.



The Charleston

By mid-December Charleston completed her work for Topsail Beach at the ocean end of the inlet, pumping enough sand onto the beach to return it to its pre-Hurricane Irene condition from just below Godwin Ave to Crocker Ave (about 21% of the whole project’s sand). She then moved to North Topsail to nourish about three miles of their beach from its Surf City line north, using sand from offshore.

The rest of the dredging for our Fall 2014 Project is being done by the much smaller pipeline dredge Chesapeake. This work will continue through the coldest winter months, in several sections and to various specifications:

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- A. Sections to be dredged to the same dimensions as the outer bar [above]:
 1. Inner part of the Inlet channel next to Lea Island, then around toward the mouth of Topsail Creek.
 2. Around the end of Topsail Island, connecting the Inlet channel to Topsail Sound's main navigation channel.
- B. Eastern third of Topsail Creek: 12 - 14 feet deep, 150 feet wide at the bottom and about 170 feet wide at the top of the cut.
- C. Two small side channels in the Sound, close to the sound-side piers, connecting to the navigation channel. These will be 7 - 9 feet deep, 80 feet wide at the bottom and about 100 feet wide at the top of the cut:
 1. Connecting to the navigation channel at Drum Ave., ending just south of Darden Ave.
 2. Connecting at the navigation channel's red marker #6 (midway between Scott & Hines Avenues), extending past Bush Marina and the Assembly Building, and connecting with the navigation channel in front of the Pearson Ave "boat basin."

The planned order of Chesapeake's work for these sections, subject to change, is:

C1 > B > A1 > A2 > C2

Chesapeake used a temporary pipeline at Drum to pump sand from the Sound across the Island, connecting to the long beach pipeline. This short section was in two pieces, each connected to a permanent piece under Anderson Blvd that was put in place in 2011, allowing easy south-end traffic flow during future nourishment projects. (There is a similar permanent section buried under Queens Grant and North Anderson Blvd to move sand from the Sound to the beach there.) The temporary parts of the Drum pipeline were removed in mid-January, then for its remaining work Chesapeake will pump some sand directly up the beach, and the rest up the Sound through a floating pipeline to the Queen's Grant connection.

The Fall 2014 Project's projected completion date is March 31, 2015, at a total cost of \$10.6 million. The FEMA-paid portion is \$2.9 million; the remaining \$7.7 million for the expanded portion is being split equally between the State of NC and local funds accumulated in the Town's reserved Beach, Inlet, and Sound (BIS) fund.

***Note:** Technical details, specifications and layout of the Fall 2014 Project are available for review at the Town Hall. They also are on the Town website, Topsailbeach.org. On the home page, scroll to the box in the middle of the right column. Weekly progress reports are posted to the Town's Facebook page.*

This Part I of the Dredging & Nourishment series was an overview of Topsail Beach's efforts over the last 25 years to manage the increasingly complex and expensive maintenance of our beach and waterways. Future Topsail Tides articles will expand on the projects introduced here, especially their scope, permitting, and financing. All residents and property owners are encouraged to become familiar with this history, to more knowledgeably influence our future.

DID YOU KNOW...

A joint effort between two commissioners, a private citizen and the Town has resulted in the placing of rescue poles with life rings at every public beach access. Everyone hopes this will be there when a swimmer is in distress and possibly save a life. The Town would like to encourage all oceanfront rental cottages and private homes to have a rope and buoy hanging on their beach access.



A Topsail Beach Life Ring

THE POOP SCOOP...

Topsail Beach is listed as one of the Top 10 Dog Friendly Beaches in North Carolina. We need to keep it that way! Frequent flooding rains this year caused much runoff into our swimming waters, and twice this summer swimmers were discouraged from swimming in certain areas of our usually pristine sound. One of the biggest pollutants is dog feces. The presence of E.coli and other bacteria is extremely high in dog poop...much higher than in the feces of pigs, sheep, horses and humans.

We have ordinances and signs telling dog owners to scoop the poop! To maintain our dog friendly status, these rules need to be followed by all! If you see someone that is not following the rules, speak to them, hand them a bag, or make a point of picking up after their dog in their presence, making a nasty face in the process.

We are also one of the few beaches that allow dogs to run off leash in the offseason. But it is important for a dog off leash to be under voice control. Do not let your dog bound up to other people or dogs. Even if your dog is friendly, some people simply don't like dogs (can you believe it!), some children are afraid of dogs, and some other dogs may not take well to your dog. So if you can't totally control your dog, keep him on leash. Back in the late 1990s our then Town Board threatened to ban dogs from the beach and/or limit leash lengths to 10 feet. Let's not tempt them to make those threats again!

We are in the Top 10 already...Let's be Number 1 when it comes to being a responsible Dog Friendly Beach.



BAFFLING, BANE, OR BORING? BEACH BUDGET BASICS

North Carolina law requires each municipality to have an annual budget to plan and track its finances, and to set an appropriate tax rate.

A municipality may elect to separate its budget into two or more component budgets, one for its general operations (**General Fund**), and one for each of any special-purpose funds it may have established. For clear separation and accountability, revenues or reserves may not be commingled or transferred between funds. Topsail Beach has one such special-purpose fund (**Water Fund**), used to manage the financing and operation of its extensive domestic water storage and distribution system

By statute, every North Carolina municipality must plan and pass a balanced budget for each of its funds by July 1 each year, covering the fiscal year from then through the end of the following June

How is our Town's Budget Built ?

For the Town of Topsail Beach this is a two-phase process: the town staff phase and the Board of Commissioners phase. Together they normally span much of the period January – June each year.

GENERAL FUND

The Staff Phase starts in January. Each department head develops the prioritized needs and estimated costs for operating his area for the coming fiscal year. He also identifies longer-range needs and projects their likely costs, to aid preparation and fiscal planning for these later years' major needs. Then each department head

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reviews his list with the town manager [Tim Holloman], working together to prepare what they both feel is a realistic framework for that department's operation for the coming fiscal year, and broadly beyond.

Several categories of town activities and expense have no town personnel directly associated with them, but are significant enough to be separately budgeted, so in budget-speak these categories also are classified as 'departments'. The best example is our dredging and beach nourishment activities, which comprise the Beach/Inlet/Sound (BIS) Department of the General Fund budget. Topsail Beach has 12 departments in its current General Fund budget.

With these first-cut expenditure drafts in hand, the town manager and town finance officer [Connie Forand] prepare a similar projection for the anticipated revenues into the General Fund for the coming fiscal year. (Connie is Topsail Beach's longest serving employee, whose story is told in another article in this issue.) Unlike the formal separation between the General Fund and Water Fund, unless a particular General Fund (GF) revenue item is earmarked for a specific GF department, it can be used for any department's expenses. While observing these limitations and any guidelines set by the Town's Board of Commissioners, the Fund's budgeted total expenditures ultimately are balanced to its total budgeted revenues. But getting to that point is a long iterative process, as the town manager and finance officer work toward that goal over a series of "staff draft" GF budgets.

Meanwhile, each February our Board of Commissioners undertakes the first of two major annual winter/spring duties. This is a 2-3 day "retreat" to discuss the broad scope of matters of longer-range concern and/or those needing more extensive evaluation than feasible in its formal regular monthly meetings. It is really just an extended "workshop." Like other such working sessions scheduled as needed during the year, it is somewhat informal, open to the public, with no votes taken. The retreat usually is moderated by an outside facilitator, freeing the mayor to fully participate in the discussions. Prior to the retreat, citizens and property owners are invited to submit written agenda suggestions, then to present them in person. A major result of the retreat is a list of the top-priority issues and goals of the Board for its attention in the following 12 months (see the 2014 Retreat priorities in Issue #1 of *Topsail Tides*, and the status update in this issue).

While the retreat generally does not address budget matters directly, its priorities and the discussions themselves set a distinct tone for the Board's likely allocation of the Town's resources over the coming year. As a retreat participant, the town manager can take a sense of this direction back to his ongoing work preparing the successive staff budget drafts. Done carefully, this can significantly improve the efficiency of the rest of the budget development process.

The town manager and finance officer continue improving the General Fund budget draft until they are satisfied that it reflects the town staff's best judgment for the appropriate use of known and projected GF revenues, including property taxes, for the coming fiscal year. They then go through a similar process of evaluating and balancing needs and revenues for the Water Fund.

WATER FUND

The Water Fund budget is relatively simple, having only one department, with mostly fixed or highly predictable expenses. It receives no tax revenue, but is self-supporting through monthly water charges and service fees, which also must cover the annual payments on loans for our newest well and the 2013 major upgrade to the town's water pumping, treatment, storage, and distribution system. (The water system is described in an article in *Topsail Tides* #1 highlighting the major Topsail Beach projects and events of 2013.)

Though entirely separate entities, the final General Fund and Water Fund drafts comprise the staff's proposed budget. In 2014 this was the third staff draft, completed in April.

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Much of May and June each year the Town board is concerned with its other major winter/spring duty, the Board of Commissioners Phase of the budgeting process, reviewing the staff's proposed budget and modifying it to reflect the public's input as well as the priorities, desires, and judgment of the Board.

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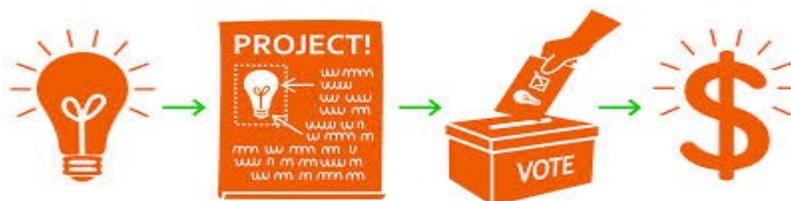
It starts at the Board's regular May meeting, first with a public hearing to hear any general comments about key financial considerations the Board should take into account in crafting the coming fiscal year's budget. Then the town manager presents an overview of the proposed staff budget (also referred to as first Board draft), summarizing the recommended tax rate(s) and expected major revenues, as well as projected expenses, for both the General Fund and the Water Fund. Particularly important are two lists the town manager highlights: significant items provided for in the staff budget, and significant items necessarily omitted.

Soon after this regular May meeting, the Board begins a series of public budget workshops (typically three are scheduled), similar in nature to the February retreat but without a facilitator. The mayor moderates, but it essentially is a conversation between the town manager and the Board, doing a line-by-line review of the entire staff budget. The town manager and financial officer provide details about items and amounts; the Board discusses and instructs them to make changes as appropriate. This continues for several hours, until it is felt sufficient progress has been made for that session. Subsequent workshops follow the same format until all items in both the General Fund and Water Fund have been evaluated. (In 2014 the process was completed in two workshop sessions.)

After each workshop the town manager and financial officer update and adjust the Board draft to reflect whatever changes the Board had stipulated. This new draft is distributed for the commissioners' study and public review prior to their next meeting. After the final workshop it is updated to its 'final' form in preparation for formal adoption at the Board's regular June meeting, and again made available for public review beforehand.

At the June board meeting, preceding the vote a required final public hearing is held to hear any comments that potentially could merit further consideration before the vote. If any are deemed of such significance, the Board has at least two more weeks in June to do so, then hold a final meeting for another public hearing and approval vote before the July 1 deadline. The approval process includes two other documents:

- A formal Budget Ordinance documenting: (1) for each Fund, lists its major revenues and total expenditures for each of its departments, (2) the ad valorem tax rate(s), (3) Town rules for the collection of revenue and distribution of Town funds.
- A Budget Summary letter from the town manager: highlights taxes and other expected revenues; discusses the fiscal year's various reserves and debt service obligations for each Fund. This letter is mailed in November with the year's Topsail Beach tax bills.



That's the Process — What's the Result?

The result is a long document (28 spreadsheet pages total for both Funds' budgets for FY 2014-15). This detail is necessary for proper planning and accounting during the fiscal year, but also makes it difficult for citizens to get an overall impression of where the needed money will come from and how it is to be used.

The next page is a *Topsail Tides* exclusive, a 1-page condensation of the original 28, making for easier general study and comparisons. All significant revenues are separately identified; but expenses are grouped in two ways: first by the most familiar service areas (slightly condensed from the full list in the Budget Ordinance), then regrouped into the major *types* of expenses. Said another way: Where the money will be needed vs. What it will be needed for.

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2014—2015 Budget, Summarized

7/01/2014—6/30/2015

General Fund

REVENUES

TB Property Taxes	\$1,040,000 *
TB Property Taxes for Beach Nourishment	\$723,800 **
T. Beach Accommodations Taxes	319,000
Pender Accommodations Taxes	319,000
Solid Waste/Recycling Fees	263,000
Local Sales Taxes	325,000
FEMA Reimbursements (Hurr. Irene)	2,908,100
State Inlet Dredging Funds	3,805,000
From Beach/Inlet/Sound (BIS) Reserves	2,992,400
Pender BIS Contribution	150,000
State Grants for Town Center	30,000
Other Revenues	<u>308,500</u>
Total	\$13,183,800

* .1725% of valuation
 ** .1200% of valuation

EXPENSES

By Dept. or Category

Management & Administration	557,000
Police	646,900
Fire	320,200
Public Works	208,100
Solid Waste/Recycling	286,000
Dredge/Nourish: BIS Fall 2014 Project	10,655,200
Hurricane Protection Program	16,100
Other Categories (3)	<u>494,300</u>
Total	\$13,183,800

EXPENSES

By Major Expense Types

Personnel Related	1,190,100
Outside Professionals	108,700
Maintenance & Repairs	112,600
Solid Waste & Recycle disposal services	264,000
Town Center Development	60,000
Capital Professional Services	615,000
Dredging/Nourishment Charges	9,991,800
Debt Service: principal + interest	248,800
Additions to Reserves	228,000
All Other Expenses	<u>364,800</u>
Total	\$13,183,800

Water Fund

REVENUES

Property Taxes	-- None --
Accommodations Taxes	-- None --
Availability Charges (fixed)	\$482,800
Water Use Charges (gallons)	262,000
Impact Fees	65,700
Tap & Connect Fees	9,000
Other Revenues	<u>10,700</u>
Total	\$830,200

(No separate departments)

EXPENSES

By Major Expense Types

Personnel Related	\$230,500
Outside Professionals	33,600
Maintenance & Repairs	20,700
Deferred System Repairs	74,000
Debt Service: principal + interest	306,500
Additions to Reserves	28,700
All Other Expenses	<u>136,200</u>
Total	\$830,200

This year the Board placed priority and budget emphasis on two areas: employee raises, and building cash reserves for certain future needs. The importance of both is reflected in the summarized budget above.

Rising health insurance premiums had kept the town staff from enjoying any net pay increase for several years. One of the Board's top priorities was to recognize and reward their good work and loyalty.

Similarly, the Board wanted to establish a pattern of identifying large future needs and accumulating funds for them in advance. This practice of annually paying forward into a group of specific reserve accounts reduces large swings in year-to-year expenses by relying less on big loans for these items later.

All budgets must balance revenues and expenses, often forcing uncomfortable compromises of some goals in order to accomplish others. This year's budget has many such compromises, the most significant being deferred street maintenance and no permanent provision for all-weather mainland storage of certain expensive off-season public works equipment. These choices were made within the context of maintaining the current Town tax rate set in 2011.

The official budget also has a 5-page appendix showing the status and amortization of the Town's four loan obligations. These all are at favorable interest rates, but because the largest and longest one is interest-free, we currently enjoy an overall rate slightly below 1%. This "snapshot" summarizes that appendix:

Debt Service Snapshot

<u>Loan Name</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	Interest <u>Rate</u>	<u>FY '14-'15 Payment</u>		Balance <u>7/1/2014</u>	Years <u>more</u>
			<u>Principal</u>	<u>Interest</u>		
GENERAL FUND						
Bush Marina	Purchase	2.39%	\$ 143,750	\$ 24,049	\$1,006,250	7
Fire Truck	Replacement	2.43%	<u>77,585</u>	<u>3,384</u>	161,901	2
			221,335	27,433		
WATER FUND						
Well #5	Add capacity	2.31%	101,179	30,318	1,416,500	12
Water System	Major upgrade	-- 0 --	<u>175,000</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>3,325,000</u>	19
			276,179	30,318		
Total Committed Debt:					\$5,909,651	
This year's payments			\$ 497,514	\$ 57,751	\$ 555,265	
Overall interest rate		0.977%				

Looking Ahead

Prior to this fiscal year, in addition to the BIS reserve fund for dredging and beach nourishment, four reserve accounts had been started totaling \$78,000. This year's budget adds \$95,000 to them, plus \$106,000 to four new ones. Considering the timing and size of these purposes, these are relatively modest contributions. But they are significant because they signify the Board's intent to prepare for non-routine future needs by creating reserve accounts for them and making annual additions to each.

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Reserve Accounts 2014-2015 Budget

FOR	PURPOSE	PRIOR BALANCE	Budgeted	
			2014 -'15 DEPOSIT	BALANCE 6-30-15
TOWN BOARD	Emergencies (hurricane)	None	\$81,131	\$81,131
FIRE DEPT	Fire Truck	\$20,000	20,000	40,000
	Duty Dorm	None	10,000	10,000
	Air Packs	None	5,000	5,000
PUBLIC WORKS (Powell)	Street Maintenance	16,331	16,000	32,331
	Vehicle Replacement	30,000	40,000	70,000
WATER SYSTEM	System Depreciation	None	10,000	10,000
	Vehicle Replacement	12,000	18,671	30,671
BIS 30-YEAR PROGRAM	Dredge/Nourish	2,992,424	55,942	
	-For Fall Project 2014		(2,992,424)	55,942
	TOTAL RESERVES	\$3,070,755	(\$2,735,680)	\$335,075

But the sleeping giant that dwarfs all eight reserves' needs combined is Topsail Beach's share of the cost for each 4-5 year dredging/nourishment cycle (the 30-Year Project: see the related article in this *Topsail Tides* issue). For its financial perspective, it is especially helpful that the current fiscal year also is our first full-blown experience by which to estimate the future costs of these periodic projects. The Fall 2014 Project going on right now, opening our inlet and inner channels and putting that sand back on our beach, is our laboratory for testing the 30-Year Plan, physically and financially.

Looking at the Reserve Accounts chart and the 2014-15 Summarized Budget together, several facts stand out:

1. The entire \$3,000,000 prior balance of the Beach/Inlet/Sound (BIS) Reserve was used in this project.
2. This year's \$56,000 contribution to the BIS Reserve is far too small as a typical annual addition to build it back to a similar balance by the next cycle in 4-5 years.
3. The reimbursement from FEMA for Hurricane Irene's beach damage paid for almost as much of the Fall 2014 Project as our BIS Reserve did.
4. Without the FEMA reimbursement, the scope of the Fall 2014 Project would have to have been substantially reduced.
5. The cost of a typical dredging/nourishment cycle like the current Fall 2014 Project is about equal to 3 years of the General Fund's non-BIS expenditures.

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The bottom line:

Planning and financing our dredging/nourishment projects creatively and cost-effectively is the core activity driving all others in our community. It requires the full understanding, participation, and support of everyone, all residents and all property owners together.

“What can I do?”

Learn about the history of Topsail Beach’s past dredging and beach nourishment efforts and the details of our current options, especially the 30-Year Project and the Federal 50-Year Hurricane Protection Program.

Understand the facts; filter out the fiction. Seek knowledgeable sources; avoid the many others who believe they are.

Participate and keep informed. Attend regular meetings and workshops of the Commissioners, the Planning Board, and the BIS Committee. These are open to everyone. Review their written minutes and archived videos when you can’t be there.

Witness the Board at work, especially in its “sleeves rolled up” sessions --- the annual Retreat and the Budget Workshops.

Contribute your thoughts and suggestions at meetings; volunteer your time and skills to help with Town projects that spark your interest and curiosity. Build appreciation for your interest and regard for your insights.

VETERANS DAY FLAG RAISING CEREMONY

The Town had its very first Veterans Day Flag Raising at 11:00 am on November 11th with the Cub Scouts from Pack 270 raising the American, North Carolina and Topsail Beach flags at the Town Center.



Cub Scouts from Pack 270



American, North Carolina and Topsail Beach Flags



George “Dep” Depaola, 93 year old long term resident and fisherman of Topsail Beach who is a Veteran of World War II

INSURANCE COMMISSIONER WAYNE GOODWIN: Speaks at Topsail Island Shoreline Protection Commission

The Topsail Island Shoreline Protection Commission invited Insurance Commissioner Wayne Goodwin to Topsail Island on December 11, 2014 to discuss Homeowners Insurance rates (not flood insurance) with interested citizens and business owners from our area. Later that day, the NC Insurance Commission tweeted “Many thanks to Topsail Leaders for inviting Insurance Commissioner Goodwin to speak with folks at today’s Town Hall meeting”. We, too, are grateful to them for giving us an opportunity to learn more about the issue of requested increased insurance rates that would affect us all.



Wayne Goodwin and Topsail Island Shoreline Protection Commission

Since that meeting, Insurance Commissioner Goodwin announced his decision to reject the NC Insurance Rate Bureau’s request for rate increases and to allow changes that were specifically data driven. The current planned changes will have minimal impact on Topsail homeowners’ insurance bills next year. The decision came after a hearing, that began on October 20, 2014 and lasted several weeks, examined the insurance companies’ request to raise insurance rates by 25.3 percent. Not only was it the first hearing since Commissioner Goodwin took office in 2009, it was the first hearing of its kind since 1992. Year after year the Insurance Commissioners (James Long – from 1985-2009 and Wayne Goodwin 2009-present) and the North Carolina Rate Bureau, representing the 150 Residential Insurance Companies in North Carolina, accepted the rate increases without a hearing. During the October –November 2014 hearing, experts from the N.C. Rate Bureau, on behalf of the insurance companies, and experts from the N.C. Department of Insurance, representing the interests of the public, presented their cases for and against the rate hikes.

The order becomes effective June 1, 2015. If you would like to see the full 356 page Order, it is available here: http://www.ncdoi.com/Media/Documents/12-19-14_HO_Order_Total.pdf

TOPSAIL TRIVIA

Where did this sign hang and when?



The original Topsail Beach Town Hall sign

In 1964, the Topsail Beach Post Office moved to its current building, complete with the roller skating rink upstairs, that Postmistress Doris Jenkins and her husband, builder Sonny Jenkins, built next to their home on Anderson Blvd. The post office had only one entrance, the middle door of the three there now. The right side door entered into a separate office, which was Topsail Beach Town Hall, with this sign hanging over the door.

Doris Jenkins has served Topsail Beach as Postmistress since 1962. At that time, the Town had one employee, the part-time town clerk—who was also Doris. With an inside door between the two offices, she simply split her time between both duties, as needed.

This arrangement continued until the present Town Hall was built in the early 1970s. Doris and Sonny then enlarged the post office into its present form, about doubling its size by including the space of the old Town Hall office.

WAYS TO STAY INFORMED ABOUT TOPSAIL BEACH:

Regularly View Our Website

The Town of Topsail Beach tries to maintain its website with the most up-to-date information available on upcoming meetings and valuable information about the Town. Viewers have access to finances, town ordinances, necessary application forms and information about our numerous departments. Please visit us at www.topsailbeach.org.

Blackboard Connect: CTY

Please sign up for Blackboard Connect (CTY messaging service) in which you will receive important messages from the Town via phone, text or e-mail. Just go to the Town of Topsail Beach's website at www.topsailbeach.org and click on the Connect CTY icon, follow the prompts and fill out required information (it's confidential).

Join the "Sunshine List"

Please e-mail Christina Watkins, Topsail Beach Town Clerk, at townclerk@topsailbeach.org to have your e-mail address added to the "Sunshine List" and receive important Topsail Beach notices and information.

Friend us on Facebook

Check out our Facebook Page for daily updates on Town events and information.



UPCOMING SPRING/SUMMER NEWSLETTER:

- Highlights from the 2015 Board Retreat and priorities.
- Dredging/Beach Nourishment series: Part II
- Budget, Financial Information and Updates.
- Town Center Update.
- Interview with a Town Employee.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- Be sure to keep your May Water Bill. It will be stamped to serve as the 2015 season Hurricane Pass.
- Log on to the Town's website for Flood Information.
- Be sure to apply sunscreen and have a safe time in the sun—see the Town's website for precautions to prevent sunburn.



An Aerial View of Topsail Beach