

TOWN OF HIGHLAND BEACH • MARCH 2025

MANAGER'S MONTHLY



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*FIRST RESPONDER AND
VETERAN RECOGNITION*

MESSAGE FROM YOUR MANAGER



As we step into the heart of 2025, I want to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to continue serving as your Town Manager. It is truly an honor to work alongside a strong and caring Commission and a professional team of dedicated employees, all committed to making Highland Beach an exceptional and charming beach community. Each day, I am continually inspired by the wonderful residents I meet—people who embody the true spirit of our *3 Miles of Paradise* at the northern tip of Florida's Gold Coast.

I hope everyone is enjoying a fantastic 2025 season, which began in grand fashion with our annual Mingle Jingle! This year's celebration was extra special, as over 1,500 beautiful residents gathered to mark Highland Beach's 75th anniversary! It was heartwarming to see friendships rekindled and new connections made as we all celebrated the spirit of our *3 Miles of Paradise*.

As we recognize the closing of the town's 75th season, the Town Commission invites you to join us at the **Commission's Spring Fling** on Thursday, March 27, from 5:00 to 8:00 PM at St. Lucy Catholic Church. This event is another highlight of the season, featuring food trucks, music, and drinks, providing the perfect way to conclude another wonderful beach season in Highland Beach. I never tire of expressing my appreciation for Father Horgan (Town Chaplin) and St. Lucy Catholic Church, whose partnership in hosting these community events is invaluable.

I also want to remind residents about the election on Tuesday, March 11, at Town Hall from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM. The Town Commission is seeking resident approval to allocate up to \$3.5 million (budgeted funds, with no financing or tax rate increases) for two critical public safety projects:

1. A police/fire rescue marine unit docking facility at Town Hall, partially funded through a Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) Grant. [\[Coastal Star Article\]](#)
2. Rehabilitation of the old fire station and apparatus bays, which includes essential structural updates, equipment enhancements, and secure storage for over \$2 million worth of fire rescue vehicles.

These projects are vital to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of our public safety operations, ensuring our town remains a safe and vibrant community. The Town Commission deeply values its relationship with the residents and looks forward to continuing to earn your

trust and support. Your input and engagement in these projects are essential to maintaining the high quality of life we all treasure.

Please [click here](#) to watch the full discussion of the referendum question at the December 3, 2024 Town Commission Meeting (discussion begins at 1:22:45).

Lastly, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to Commissioner Evalyn David, who has admirably served Highland Beach for the past six years. Commissioner David has been the consummate public servant, always focused on improving, enhancing, and protecting our beautiful town. Her dedication has left a lasting impact not only on me but the entire Town, and we are truly grateful for her service.

At the same time, I want to offer a warm welcome to our new Commissioner, Jason Chudnofsky. I am confident that Commissioner Chudnofsky will serve this community with compassion and a strong commitment to our future. You can read more about both Commissioner David and Commissioner Chudnofsky later in this newsletter.

Thank you all for your continued support and engagement in making Highland Beach the extraordinary place that it is. I look forward to seeing you at the Spring Fling and around town as we celebrate another incredible season together!

Committed to honorably serving the community,

*Marshall Labadie, ICMA-CM
Town Manager*

A Legacy of Service: Thank You Commissioner Evalyn David



Commissioner Evalyn David was elected to the office of Commissioner in March of 2019 and subsequently in March of 2022.

She graduated from New York University with a BS degree and went on to earn a Law Degree from Seton Hall Law School graduating Cum laude. She then decided to pursue her interest in financial planning and to specialize in taxation earning her Master of Law Degree at New York University Law School. Commissioner David's specialty is in Trust and Estate Planning and her professional career was in the Banking and Legal Industries.

Prior to her retirement and moving to Highland Beach in 2008, she enjoyed a successful private practice assisting families with their estate, trust and tax plans. After coming to Highland Beach, she was fortunate to become a member of the Braemer Isle Board of Directors where she continues to serve for more than 8 years. Her and her husband have two wonderful children, Matthew who is here in South Florida and Alyssa in New York. Her personal interests include but are not limited: baking, wine education, exploring new challenges and lending a helping hand.

During Commissioner David's term in office, the Town of Highland Beach achieved several significant accomplishments:

- **Fire Rescue Department Implementation and Completion:** Successfully established the Town's first-ever Fire Rescue Department, ensuring enhanced emergency response times and improved public safety for residents. This initiative included recruiting highly trained personnel, acquiring state-of-the-art equipment, and constructing a modern fire station to meet the community's growing needs.
- **Building Recertification Program:** Launched the program aimed at safeguarding structural integrity of our condominiums and enhancing community resilience against potential environmental hazards.
- **Interlocal Agreement with the Town of Gulfstream:** Negotiated and executed a strategic Interlocal Agreement with the neighboring Town of Gulfstream, fostering cooperation and resource sharing. This partnership has led to increased revenue and strengthened our inter-community relationships.

- **Launched Police Marine Unit:** Established a dedicated Police Marine Unit to enhance waterfront security, enforce boating regulations, and protect the local marine environment. This specialized unit actively patrols coastal areas, ensuring the safety of residents and visitors while preserving the town's natural resources.
- **Received Appropriations for Lift Station 2 & 3 (\$250,000 each):** Secured state funding to upgrade Lift Stations 2 and 3, enhancing the town's wastewater management system. This investment improves operational efficiency, reduces maintenance costs, and supports environmental sustainability.
- **Building Budget Reserves:** Implemented strategic financial management practices to build substantial budget reserves, strengthening the town's fiscal health. This initiative enhances financial stability, provides a safeguard against economic uncertainties, and ensures long-term sustainability of community services.
- **Town of Highland Beach 75th Anniversary:** Organized and celebrated the Town of Highland Beach's 75th Anniversary. This milestone fostered community pride, honored the town's rich history, and promoted civic engagement.

As Commissioner Evalyn David's term comes to an end, we sincerely thank her for her dedicated service, passion, and commitment to the Town of Highland Beach. Her contributions have greatly enriched our community, and we look forward to her continued involvement in town affairs.

Meet our New Town Commissioner – Jason Chudnofsky



Before moving to Highland Beach, I spent my career building corporate teams and leading global brands. As President of the Interface Group, the world's largest privately owned trade show company, I expanded our reach across North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific Rim. Notable brands and companies that thrived under my leadership include Net World Plus Interop, Windows World, Seybold Seminars, Java One, Ziff Davis Publishing, Von Expos, and Pulver Media. Our number one brand was Comdex (Computer Dealer Expo), the largest Computer Trade Show in the world.

While President of the Interface Group, my responsibilities also included being President of the Sands Convention Center, Las Vegas, the largest two million square foot privately owned Convention Center in the United States.

My efforts earned recognition as one of the 50 Most Influential People in High Tech by Multimedia Magazine and one of the 25 Most Influential People in The Meeting Industry.

In addition to my professional achievements, I have always prioritized giving back to the community. I've served on the boards of organizations like The Visiting Nurses Association, the Museum of Science Boston, the Anti-Defamation League, The Stanley Tippet Hospice House, Combined Jewish Appeal of Boston, and the Jewish Community Centers of Greater Boston.

My commitment to civic service continues in South Florida, where I serve as Chairman of the Highland Beach Police and Fire Foundation, Commissioner of the Town of Highland Beach (starting March 25), member of the 100 Club of South Palm Beach County, and Chair of the 75th Anniversary Celebration for Highland Beach. As past President of the Coronado Association for four years I am proud to have overseen the completion of the required steps to achieve Certification-for our property. This process was approved by both certified engineers and the Town of Highland Beach.

I am originally from Boston, Massachusetts and hold a BS in Business Management from Northeastern University. My teammates and I were inducted into the Universities Hall of Fame last year as our 1963 team was the only Undefeated Football Team in the history of the university. My wife Judy and I are proud parents of two daughters, three grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN HIGHLAND BEACH?

Upcoming Agenda Items (Subject to Change and Additional Items may be Added)

- Strategic Priorities – FY2024-25 Updates
- Comprehensive Plan Update
- FDOT RRR Project Updates
- Continued Discussion of Milani Park
- Referendum for Public Safety Projects - March 11, 2025
- MyHighlandBeach App Development
- Commissioner's Spring Fling – March 27th

Board Vacancies

Code Enforcement Board – One (1) vacancy for a three-year term

One (1) vacancy for an unexpired term ending May 30, 2025.

For additional information, please contact the Town Clerk's Office at (561) 278-4548 or email lgaskins@highlandbeach.us (Lanelda Gaskins) or jdehart@highlandbeach.us (Jaclyn DeHart), Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

YOU'RE INVITED
to the
*Commissioner's
Spring Fling*



MARCH 27TH, 2025
5PM - 8PM

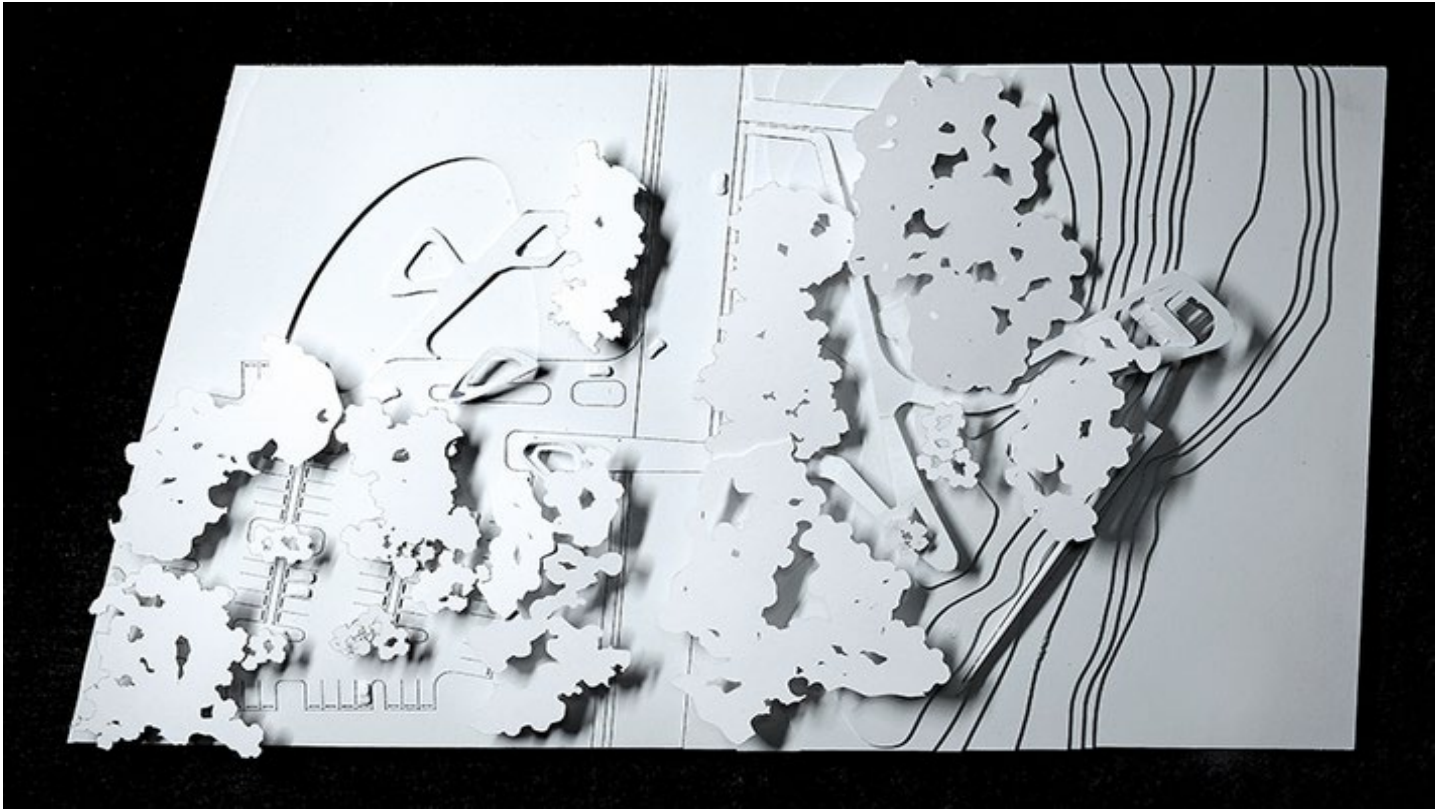
ST. LUCY CATHOLIC CHURCH
3510 S. OCEAN BOULEVARD,
HIGHLAND BEACH, FL 33487

Please RSVP by scanning the QR code
or click this [link](#)



ENJOY FOOD, MUSIC, AND FRIENDS AS WE
SAY GOODBYE TO SEASON AND HELLO TO
SPRING!

Milani Park



Rendering of Milani Park proposed design

Please refer to the [article](#) from the Coastal Star for some further discussion of the proposed site design.

Cam D. Milani Park - Community Outreach Meeting

Palm Beach County is inviting the public to the Milani Park Community Meeting, where the design team, Brooks + Scarpa, and county staff will present their plans for the park. This meeting will be a chance to learn about the designs and ask any questions.

Location: South County Civic Center (16700 Jog Rd, Delray Beach, FL 33446)

Date and Time: April 2nd, 2025 at 6pm.

Please review the [community outreach letter](#) for more information.

COMMUNITY

Board Member Spotlight – Maggie Chappelear (Financial Advisory Board)



Maggie Chappelear is currently serving on the Financial Advisory Board as its newest member. She served for years on the town's Natural Resources Board and provided the town with Power Point presentations on the topic of Dune Restoration that can be found on the town's website to offer advice on types of plants that would stop the erosion of homeowners' dunes in our 3 miles of paradise. You might recognize her name from when she ran for commissioner a few years back.

Her background includes a business degree from Florida State University, Master's & Specialist degrees in Science Education, and Doctoral candidate work at FAU in Curriculum & Instruction.

Currently she is co-broker and managing member of Eastland Realty Partners LLC and is also assisting with the development of a luxury

beachfront hotel & spa located in Palm Beach County.

As Eastland's comptroller, Ms. Chappelear main roles are to collect data, analyze real estate hospitality and multi-family opportunities, and offer pricing guidance to the firm's clients. ProFormas and financial analysis is one of her strongest business skills which allows her to work well with members of the Financial Advisory Board.

Ms. Chappelear has been a long-time resident of Highland Beach since 1985. After years of commuting from Miami during the 1980's to develop multifamily projects in Boca Raton & Delray Beach, she decided to make Highland Beach her permanent home in a community she loves to serve.

As an environmentalist, Ms. Chappelear assisted the Natural Resources Board by obtaining an acknowledged expert in dune restoration to speak at their Dune Restoration Seminar. She also created awareness of the manatee and sea turtle safety on the ICW due to increased boat traffic and dangerous wakes. This attempt with the FWC became a boater safety concern well before the fatal accidents on the ICW which resulted in our town obtaining our first marine patrol boat.

As a concerned citizen, Ms. Chappelear has been advocating with Palm Beach County Commissioner Marci Woodward, that some residents would love to see less parking spaces at the proposed Milani Park and would enjoy amenities such as: a children's play area, sea turtle education section, art and sculpture exhibits, bicyclist area, a place for joggers and walkers to sit, and much more green areas that were not proposed...this would result in Less Parking and more Nature.

FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT



Fire Smoke Alarms – by Matt Welhaf, Assistant Fire Chief

Hello All,

In this article, I want to convey how important it is to have working smoke alarms in your residence. In the United States, residential occupancies have the highest number of fire-related deaths compared to all other occupancies. The Florida Fire Prevention Code (FFPC) requires fire smoke alarms in multi-family dwellings (buildings with three (3) or more dwelling units). Although this requirement is enforceable by the Fire Department only in multi-family dwellings, I can't stress enough how crucial it is to have these LIFE-SAVING devices installed in every home.

First, let's clarify the difference between a smoke alarm and a smoke detector. Smoke alarms are single or multi-station devices that, when they detect smoke, activate an audible alarm within the individual dwelling unit. They are not part of the building fire detection system, do not activate the building's alarm system, and do not notify the fire department.

Smoke detectors, on the other hand, are part of the building's fire alarm system. They activate the building's audible/visible alarm devices and notify the fire department.

While smoke alarms are designed to warn occupants, they are not intended to protect property or extinguish the fire. When the alarm sounds, occupants must follow their emergency exit plan. In most cases, smoke alarms will activate during a fire's early (incipient) stage, sometimes even before visible smoke appears, and typically before the fire sprinkler system (if present) is activated. This gives occupants time to stop the fire or escape.

Per the FFPC, NFPA 72 – National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code, "Fire-warning equipment (fire smoke alarms) for residential occupancies shall provide a reliable means to notify the occupants of the presence of a threatening fire and the need to escape to a place of safety before such escape might be impeded by untenable conditions in the normal path of egress." An effective fire warning system relies on the proper installation, use, and maintenance of the equipment. The following information covers equipment requirements and installation guidelines.

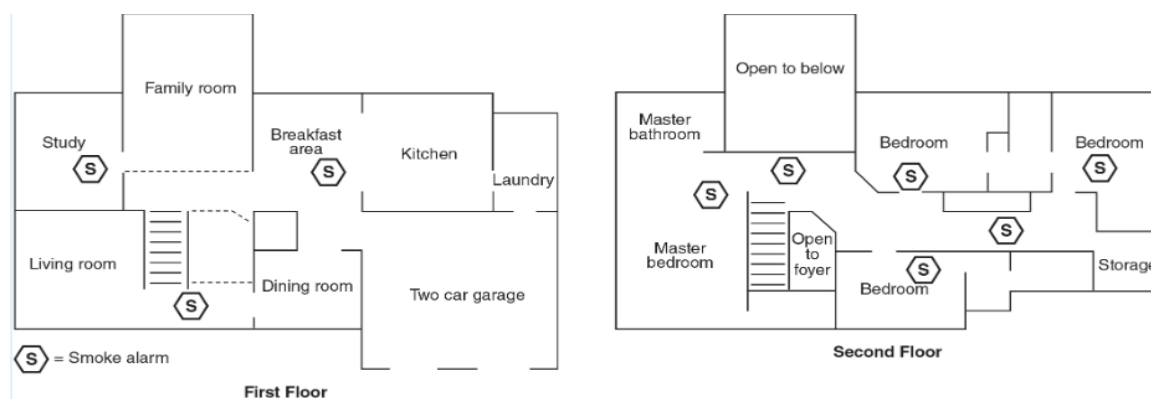
All devices, combinations of devices, and equipment to be installed must be approved, labeled, or listed for the purposes for which they are intended. The term "Approved" means acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ); the AHJ, in this case, is Highland Beach Fire Rescue (HBFR). The term "Listed" refers to products evaluated by an organization (Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory) acceptable to the AHJ; for fire smoke alarms, UL is an example of an NRTL. The term "Labeled" refers to products that have been marked with a label, symbol, or other

identifying mark from an organization acceptable to the AHJ. The listing organization does not approve equipment; only the AHJ with jurisdiction can approve equipment.

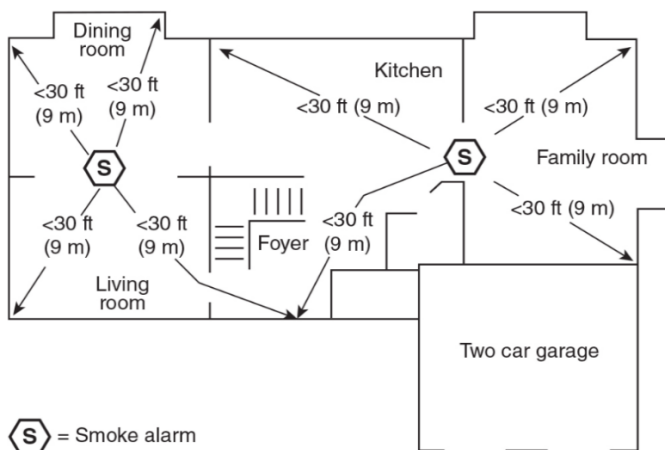
Once installed, ALL smoke alarms are required to be replaced every ten (10) years. Some one- and two-unit dwellings (single-family homes and duplexes) may have existing combination fire and burglar alarm systems. These combination systems must meet all the requirements listed in this article. I cannot stress enough the importance of regular maintenance for both new and existing fire smoke alarms.

Listed single- and multiple-station smoke alarms shall be installed as follows:

- (1) In all sleeping rooms and guest rooms.
- (2) Outside of each separate dwelling unit sleeping area, within 21 ft (6.4 m) of any door to a sleeping room, with the distance measured along a path of travel.
- (3) On every level of a dwelling unit, including basements.
- (4) In the living area(s) of a guest suite.



Additionally, if the areas mentioned above are separated from the adjacent living areas by a door, a smoke alarm must be installed in the area between the door and the sleeping rooms, and additional smoke alarms must be installed on the living area side of the door. Further, where the interior floor area for a given level of a dwelling unit, excluding garage areas, is greater than 1,000 ft², smoke alarms shall be installed. All points on the ceiling should have a smoke alarm within 30 ft travel distance or shall have an equivalent of one smoke alarm per 500 ft² of floor area. Finally, where dwelling units include great rooms or vaulted/cathedral ceilings extending over multiple floors, smoke alarms located on the upper floor that are intended to protect the area, as mentioned above, shall be permitted to be considered as part of the lower floor(s) protection scheme used to meet the requirements.



Interconnectivity of all fire smoke alarms within each dwelling unit is required. Fire smoke alarms providing a fire-warning function, and where two or more alarms are installed within a dwelling unit, suite of rooms, or similar area, shall be arranged so that the operation of any smoke alarm causes all alarms within these locations to sound. The use of the hard-wired “interconnect” feature with multi-station alarms is preferred and satisfies the

requirements for a typical arrangement of interconnected multi-station fire smoke alarms.

Hardwiring of these smoke alarms may not be feasible in some existing buildings. In this case, HBFR allows the use of interconnected wireless fire smoke alarms and 10-year battery-operated devices.

One final consideration: If your dwelling has any fuel-operated appliances (stoves, water heaters, fireplaces, heaters, etc.) within the living space where you sleep, I strongly recommend installing combination fire smoke/carbon monoxide alarms. Carbon monoxide is colorless, odorless, and deadly. Please take advantage of these low-cost, life-saving devices to protect you and your family.



For any questions regarding anything referenced in this article, please contact me at (561) 278-4548. Thank you.

Assistant Chief
Matt Welhaf
Highland Beach Fire Rescue

POLICE DEPARTMENT



Don't Be A Victim – Be Aware of IRS Scams

With the tax season approaching, we want our residents to be aware of IRS scams that occur. If the IRS does contact you about anything, including unpaid taxes, it will be by mail, NOT by phone and they will NEVER ask you to pay with prepaid debit/gift cards.

Identity thieves may try to contact taxpayers through fraudulent calls, emails, texts and social media messages pretending to be the IRS. Here's how taxpayers know when it's the IRS that contacts them.

Email, Text and Social Media

The IRS will mail a letter or notice before calling or emailing. The IRS DOES NOT:

- Send unexpected or unsolicited text messages to taxpayers.
- Initiate contact with taxpayers by email, text message or through social media.
- Send messages that ask for personal or financial information, especially when it comes to a tax refund.

Common IRS-related online scams include:

- [Phishing emails](#) sent to taxpayers.
- **Fake IRS social media accounts** that contact taxpayers about a fake bill, grant or refund.
- **Text messages** sent to taxpayers for fake "tax credits" or "stimulus payments."

Scammers' messages often direct taxpayers to click fraudulent links they claim are IRS websites or other online tools.

Phone Calls

After mailing a notice or letter to a taxpayer, IRS agents may call to confirm an appointment or discuss items for a scheduled audit. Taxpayers should know that:

- The IRS DOES NOT leave pre-recorded, urgent or threatening messages. Scammers will tell victims that if they do not call back, a warrant will be issued for their arrest - These calls are scams.

- Private collection agencies that the IRS works with may call taxpayers to collect certain outstanding inactive tax liabilities, but only after sending written notice to the taxpayer and their representative.
- The IRS and its authorized private collection agencies will NEVER ask a taxpayer to pay using any form of pre-paid card, store or online gift card. Taxpayers can review the IRS payments page at [IRS.gov/payments](https://www.irs.gov/payments) for all legitimate ways to make a payment.

A letter or notice is usually the first contact a taxpayer gets from the IRS contacts. If a taxpayer gets a suspicious letter or notice, they can check to see if it's really the IRS:

- Log in to their [secure IRS Online Account](#) to find a copy of the notice or letter.
- Contact [IRS customer service](#) to verify it, if they weren't able to do so in their Online Account.
- Review IRS letters and notices at [Understanding your IRS notice or letter](#).
- Confirm that collection notices from a [private collection agency](#) have the same taxpayer authentication number as the [Notice CP40](#) the taxpayer received from the IRS.
- Visit [Private debt collection frequently asked questions](#) to learn more about verifying a private collection agency.

Warning Signs of a Scam

If taxpayers get an unexpected letter, email or text that claims to be from the IRS or another trusted source – like a bank, a credit company or a tax software provider – here are some tell-tale signs that it's a scam:

- Spelling errors or incorrect grammar.
- A link or attachment with a slightly misspelled URL or an unusual one such as irs.com. All IRS links go to irs.gov.
- A threatening or urgent request to pay now, to follow a link or to open an attachment.

Taxpayers who receive a request from IRS in the mail or by phone can always contact [IRS customer service](#) to authenticate it.

It is important to know that someone does not have to wait to be a victim to contact us. Our Police Department is always available to answer any questions or provide information that will help keep people from being victims.

BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Protecting Property Owners By Understanding Florida's Construction Lien Laws

As construction projects continue throughout the Town of Highland Beach, it is essential for property owners to understand their responsibilities and rights regarding Florida's lien laws. Failure to follow proper procedures could result in unexpected liens on your property, even if you have paid your contractor in full.

The Importance of a Notice of Commencement (NOC)

Under Florida Statute 713.13, property owners must record a **Notice of Commencement (NOC)** with the county clerk before any construction project **meeting or exceeding \$5,000** (\$15,000 for HVAC work) begins. The NOC serves as a formal declaration of the project and ensures transparency regarding all parties involved. A copy of the recorded NOC must be posted at the job site and provided to the Building Department before the first inspection.

Protecting Against Liens

Even when a property owner pays the general contractor (GC) in full, **subcontractors and suppliers can still file a lien** against the property if they have not been paid. To safeguard against this, property owners should take the following steps:

1. **Obtain Partial Lien Releases** – When making progress payments, request a **partial lien release** from both the GC and subcontractors for that phase of work.
2. **Secure a Final Lien Release** – Before making final payment, obtain a **final lien release** from the GC and all subcontractors and suppliers.
3. **Request a Contractor's Affidavit** – Before issuing the last payment, ask for an affidavit from the GC stating that **all parties have been paid in full**.
4. **Track Notices to Owner (NTOs)** – Subcontractors and suppliers who do not contract directly with the owner must send a **Notice to Owner (NTO)** within **45 days of starting work** to preserve their lien rights. Owners should keep track of NTOs and confirm payments to those entities.

Why This Matters

Construction liens can create legal and financial headaches for property owners. Understanding the lien process and proactively obtaining lien releases ensures that your investment remains protected. These simple steps can help avoid potential disputes and provide peace of mind.

Code Tip of the Month: Sea Turtle Nesting Season

Sea Turtle Nesting Season begins March 1st, as turtles lay eggs on the beach. Hatchlings rely on moonlight to reach the ocean, but artificial lighting can disorient them. Trampling, habitat loss, poaching, and climate change also threaten their survival.

To help, Highland Beach requires beachfront properties to use “Turtle Safe” lighting and prohibits harming or disturbing turtles, eggs, or nests. These efforts support population recovery.

For more info, contact Highland Beach Code Compliance at 561-278-4540.

PLANNING AND ZONING

IT'S SEA TURTLE NESTING SEASON (**March 1 – October 31**), please follow these tips and share them with your community:

- **Keep beaches dark.** From dusk to dawn, turn off any lights not necessary for human safety. [Use long wavelength amber LED lamps for lights that must stay lit and shield lights](#), so they are not visible from the beach. Remember to close shades or curtains at night.
- **No flash photos.** On the beach at night, don't take flash photos or use bright cellphones or flashlights. This can cause turtles to become disoriented and crawl away from the ocean, putting them at risk.
- **Remember, sea turtles are protected by law.** Keep your distance and give sea turtles space if you see one on the beach. Never touch a nesting turtle because it might leave the beach without nesting if disturbed.
- **Clear the way at the end of the day.** Beach furniture, boats, toys and trash left behind on the sand can become obstacles that block crawling sea turtles. Fill in any holes dug in the sand. Holes can trap turtles and they also pose a safety risk to humans.

Bright lights from buildings can cause sea turtles to become disoriented, leading the hatchlings to stray away from the shoreline where they need to swim and start their life. If they are unable to reach the ocean quickly, they can become dehydrated and exhausted, making them an easy meal for predators. In order to minimize “interior light” emanating from doors and windows within line-of-sight of the beach, one or more of the following remedial measures are required:

*Rearrange lamps, televisions, and other movable fixtures away from windows.

*Use opaque shades or room darkening window treatments (e.g. blinds, curtains, screens).

*Apply window tint or film that meets the light transmittance standards for tinted glass.

*Other remedial measures approved by the Building Official.

Please report sea turtles that are sick, injured, dead, entangled or are in danger to the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at [888-404-3922](tel:888-404-3922) so trained responders can help. For information on the Town's sea turtle lighting ordinance, please contact Ingrid Allen, Town Planner, at 561-637-2012 or iallen@highlandbeach.us



LIBRARY

Library News – March 2025

We are excited to announce the launch of a new digital service! Kanopy is now available for Highland Beach Library cardholders. This streaming service gives you instant access to over 30,000 films, tv series, documentaries and children's content. Once you create your account, you can stream video content on your computer or smart TV or visit your app store to download the Kanopy app for your smartphone or tablet. Visit <https://highlandbeach.kanopy.com/> to get started.

Upcoming Events:

Concerts – at 5:30 pm

- March 6: Dolce Trio (One enchanted evening)
Bring your library card for priority seating
- March 25: Jennings & Keller (folk)
- April 3: Harpeggio (harp and flute)

Movies – at 5:30 pm

- March 4: Thelma
- March 18: Here

Book Discussion Group – 4:30 pm

- March 19: *Take My Hand* by Dolen Perkins-Valdez

Lectures – 5:30 pm

- April 8: Shells of Highland Beach by Dr. Martin Shugar
- April 10: Blackwater Diving Off the Coast by Linda Ianniello

Ongoing Activities:

- Dancercise: Mondays at 5:30 pm
- Yoga Flow with Mallory: Wednesdays at 5:00 pm
- Current Events Discussion Group: Saturdays at 10:30 am
- Learn to download eBooks: call for appointment
- Small Fry Story Time plus Crafts: Wednesdays at 4:30 pm, ages 4 and up
- Toddler Time - Stories and Rhymes: Saturdays at 10:30 am, ages 2 and 3

Call us at 561-278-5455 for more information.

Library Hours:

Monday – Thursday	10:00 AM to 8:00 PM
Friday	10:00 AM - 4:30 PM
Saturday	9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

First Responder Awards for Highland Beach

By John Shoemaker

Each year, our Fire and Police Departments select their top performers and recognize them for contributing to our efforts to protect and improve our safety and security.

Recognizing each worker's leadership, performance, and passion brings our various teams high praise and honor and sets an example for all. It also demonstrates their dedication to our Town and our residents.

We have three representatives to recognize their contributions during 2024 for the Firefighters, EMS, and Police teams in the Town of Highland Beach, as approved by our **Fire Chief, Glen Joseph**, and our **Police Chief, Craig Hartmann**.

Highland Beach Law Enforcement



We begin with our **2024 "Police Officer of the Year"** award to **David Skrabec**. A few months ago, Officer Skrabec was recognized as one of the Town's military "Veteran Heroes," and his story is on the Veteran's tab of the Town's website: [Veteran-Article--Dave-Skrabec](#). As a U.S. Marine, he served in the wars in Kuwait and Iraq. After more than 25 years in law enforcement, Sergeant Skrabec joined the Highland Beach Police Force.

This past year, Sergeant Skrabec made exceptional contributions to his team, starting with his supervisory management assignment and overseeing the department's field training program for all new officers.

Sergeant Skrabec ensured that all training was conducted and documented in accordance with policy and accreditation standards. Such training is extensive and vitally important for dealing with a multitude of potential problems. During the year, he was also designated as the extra-detail coordinator for the department due to his administrative skills and attention to detail.

In addition to his daily supervisory responsibilities, Sergeant Skrabec represents our Police Department as an "Honor Guard" member at various events. He is the first to volunteer or offer assistance to our police force. For example, he has taken a personal interest in the health and wellness of our officers. He took the initiative to research fitness equipment upgrades and proposed and itemized a budget for review and approval.

He has been a role model for others by promoting a healthy lifestyle, creating fitness training standards for officers, and raising the expectation of fitness training and nutrition throughout the organization.

Chief Hartmann highly regards Sergeant Skrabec's leadership, work ethic, and can-do attitude as an example of other officers wanting to work with him and work for him. His commitment to his duties and teamwork promotes an esprit de corps work environment that is recognized and appreciated by all.

Highland Beach Fire Department



Christopher Zidar is a Fire Captain in our Fire Rescue group and recommended **Raynier "Ray" Charafardin** for the **2024 "Paramedic of the Year"** Award. As the "Lead Paramedic" for Rescue 120, he takes the lead role on emergency medical calls. He expertly coordinates a team response to changing and complex life safety situations for patient care and management. He must assess the situation and react with deliberation and expediency, making critical decisions and delivering the proper care at the right time. Ray is known for dealing with these situations calmly, confidently, and with expertise. Highland Beach residents can rest assured that Ray stands ready to deliver superior clinical care in all conditions, especially during emergencies.

In addition to field calls in our Town, Ray plays a critical role in developing and training his colleagues. He is a mentor to his teammates. He must conduct medical classes, share hands-on experiences, and reinforce procedures, rules, and plans.

An example of his work above and beyond the routine tasks, he led the department's effort involving eCPR. Ray was the lead paramedic on Highland Beach Fire Rescue's first cardiac arrest case and delivered life-saving resuscitation and obtained ROSC or return of spontaneous circulation. In other words, he and his team saved the patient's life. After hospitalization, the patient was released and has returned to enjoying the benefits of our little piece of paradise.



Our next award goes to our **2024 "Firefighter of the Year," Theodore (T.J.) DiGangi**, as "Driver Engineer," was instrumental in the early days of establishing our new Fire Department. He is responsible for acquiring, transporting, and retrofitting all four apparatus (the Fire/EMS trucks) for our Town. It was a tough time with so much to do in a short period due to commitments in time and funds coinciding with contractual commitments in the hand-off from Delray Beach Fire and the construction of our Fire Station. He then had to coordinate the acquisition and proper assignment of all equipment needed on each vehicle. T.J. then went on to train all 28 new Department personnel on using, handling, and caring for the equipment. Ensuring all personnel have the equipment/supplies that match their skills and mission is critically important.

T.J. was one of the Town's representatives volunteering his time to attend the memorial services honoring the three fallen Palm Beach Sheriff's officers killed in a highway disaster. It is just another example of his selflessness and solidarity with our public safety community. Also, he was very involved in the planning and executing of the Town's famous "Mingle & Jingle" celebration for our 75th Town Anniversary. Many of the visitors saw the display of vehicles, equipment, and the enormous US Flag.

The **Town of Highland Beach** proudly recognizes these Fire, EMS, and Police responders and their respective teams for their exceptional service to our community. Our newly formed Firefighting and Emergency Medical Services, led by **Chief Glen Joseph**, has made incredible progress in the last year, with a newly constructed facility – Fire Station #120, newly formed and trained teams, new equipment, and vehicles. They are now fully able to give us improved services with faster response times, 24 hours by 7 days a week.

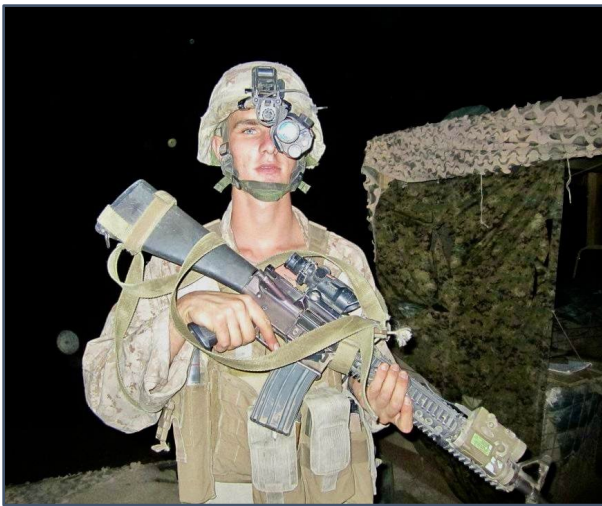
At the same time, our long-time veteran police force, led by **Chief Craig Hartmann**, continues to improve and expand with new equipment and a marine unit to patrol both sides of our barrier island while patrolling A1A for immediate response as needed. Our Police Department is widely respected in Palm Beach County and South Florida.

All teams bring a new level of **safety and security** to our "three miles of Paradise." We are so fortunate to have these teams for their experience, commitment, and contributions to our way of life.

Marine Values Family and Community

By John Shoemaker

In a continuing effort to recognize those Veterans who live in Highland Beach or serve our community, we share a short story of each and post it on our town website: www.highlandbeach.us and specifically [Veteran Heroes of Highland Beach | Highland Beach, FL](#). Please visit this tab to read stories and profiles of our citizens who have served or are serving our country and our town. Prepare to be amazed by the incredible stories of our Veterans. We have at least one Brigadier General, one who was captured by the Germans and escaped three times during the Battle of the Bulge, a WWII B-17 navigator, and other veterans who served in Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Afghanistan, and Vietnam, along with others across Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force – including a fighter pilot who trained other fighter pilots. Others served in different roles from scout dog handler to nurse, helicopter pilot to artillery Forward Observer. Some stories are quite dramatic, others very demanding and less dramatic. But all, without exception, served with the utmost honor and dedication, for which we are deeply grateful.



I am pleased to introduce you to one of our newest firefighters, James Steyn, 35 years old. Born in South Africa, his family emigrated to the US in 1997 and he went to Raleigh High School in North Carolina. He entered the delayed entry program in high school for his ambition to be a US Marine. He enlisted in 2010 and was off to Parris Island, South Carolina, for boot camp. James wanted to be an infantryman and was assigned to the Marine's Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, Florida.

After graduation, he was sent to Alpha Company, 1st Bn, 3rd Marine Division, at the Marine Corps Base, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. He was focused on land operations with some fleet assignments in the Pacific. But after a year, he was deployed to the most dangerous place on the planet – Helmand Province, Afghanistan.



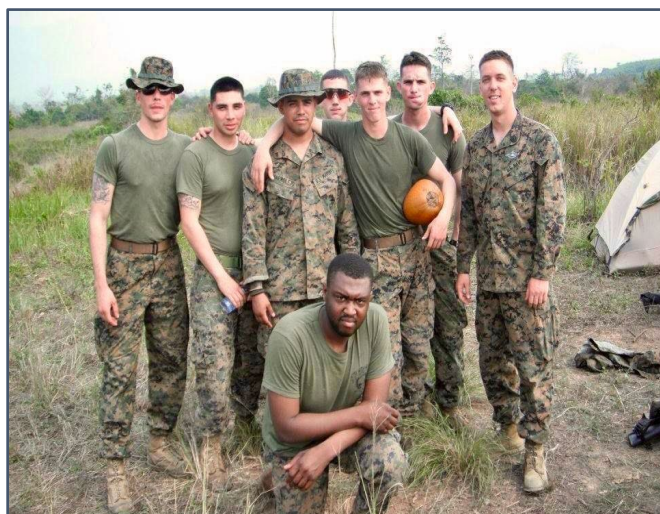


As a PFC (private first class) and a combat infantryman, he would perform combat patrols from what they referred to as a COP or Command Out Post, named COP Sharp, and also from a more remote position called Patrol Base Empire. This was very hazardous activity as they would search for the Taliban and insurgents day after day with armed patrols. As you can imagine, living conditions in this defensive compound were very primitive. He slept in a “mud hut” on a foam mat for months in a sweltering, dry, desert-like climate in summer and quite cold in winter. Contact with the enemy was rare but intense when it happened.

You can read more about the Marines in Helmand Province at: [Marines complete operations in Afghanistan, depart Helmand province > I Marine Expeditionary Force > Article](#) The Marines completed their withdrawal in 2014.

I asked James how he felt about his experience in Afghanistan and he quickly replied that he had no regrets and would do it again – in a “heartbeat.” While growing up, he was looking for travel and adventure to be a different kind of man. He stated very clearly that the leadership of the Marines was outstanding, and they received great support. Fundamentally, working with the other Marines as a “team” was an incredible experience that he values every day. The bond of trust created in his Marine unit is unshakable. He spoke of his brotherhood with team members who are like family to him today and stays in touch with all of them.

Corporal Steyn finished his enlistment of four years in 2014 after returning from Afghanistan. He talks fondly of his team members but does not want to talk much about his combat experiences. One lesson, among many, is that “no matter how bad it may be for you, someone else has it worse.” It is hard for people to understand without the experience of combat in a harsh environment with the crudest type of day-to-day living. He has learned to appreciate all that he has and to value it in a way most people cannot.

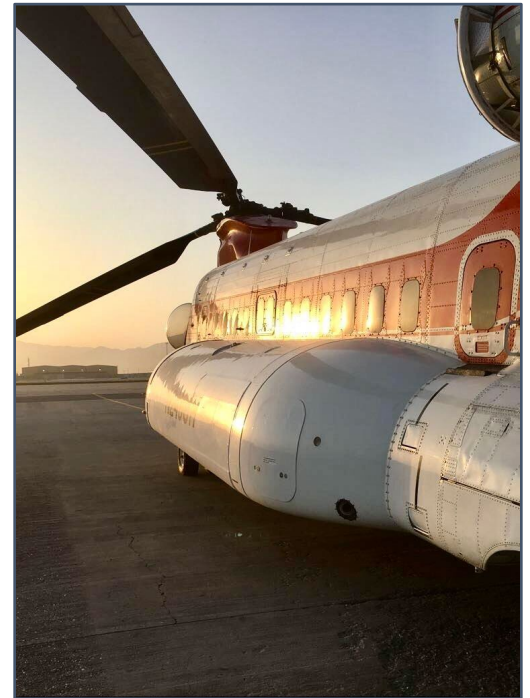


After the Marines, he went to Wake Technical Community College and joined Columbia Helicopters as a Crew Chief. It was a private helicopter company serving the US Military with logistical shipments. He spent nearly three years in Afghanistan as a civilian providing logistical support for the military using the NV246-CH or heavy-lift Chinook helicopter. Most missions involved transits between Kabul, Jalalabad, and Bagram bases.

Then, after two years, he decided to become an EMT and attended school during the COVID-19 crisis. Broadening his experience, he went to the Police Academy at Indian River State College. Not to stop his growth, he continued his training at the Indian River State College again, only to pass the firefighter requirements. Finally, he returned to school again to earn his role as a Paramedic.

So, we have all the checkboxes: EMT, Medic, Police Academy training, Firefighter, and Paramedic schools.

Given available jobs, he became a PSO or Public Safety Officer at Indian River Shores, and as soon as he graduated, he interviewed for an EMT/Firefighter in Highland Beach.



I asked, "Why Highland Beach?" He replied, "As a new department with great leadership, I wanted to support a concierge level of medical service to the community." He went on to say that he "just wants to help people." He believes that Highland Beach will not be like Delray and will deliver a higher level of service. He has total faith and trust in his crew. As he learned in Afghanistan, having an outstanding team with solid leadership means everything. He loves how the community welcomes him and all the EMTs/Firefighters. "You know, the residents beep their horns or wave to us when they pass us at the Station or on A1A," he said. "That's a great feeling." He sincerely feels the community appreciates the Fire Department and all the crews.

James is married to Kelly, and they have a 4-year-old son, Killiam, and two dogs, Cody and Cora. Kelly works from home in Port St. Lucy in a logistical support role for Gardner Life Health products.

James Steyn has come a long way from South Africa and Afghanistan to our three miles of paradise. He certainly has paid his dues and is proud of our new Fire Department. Like the others in our new Fire Department, he is a serious-minded professional who loves his job.

Please continue to beep your horns when you pass the Station and wave when you see them. We are one community, small enough to live life together, know each other, and depend on each other.

We are a community of togetherness.

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