

TOWN OF HIGHLAND BEACH • APRIL-MAY 2025

MANAGER'S MONTHLY



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MESSAGE FROM YOUR MANAGER



As April comes to a close, many of our seasonal residents have begun their annual journey to other parts of the country. On behalf of the Town Commission and staff, I want to extend our warmest wishes for safe travels. We will certainly miss your presence, engagement, and contributions to our community over the summer months. We look forward to welcoming you back home this fall to once again enjoy our "Three Miles of Paradise." In the meantime, please continue to stay connected with us by visiting our Town website for important updates and news.

We are excited to share that development of the town's new mobile app – *My Highland Beach* -- is nearly complete. This user-friendly platform is being designed to help all residents—seasonal and full-time—stay easily informed of town news, alerts, events, and services. We look forward to launching the app soon and hope it becomes a convenient tool for staying engaged with your Town government.

I would also like to thank our residents for their overwhelming support during the March referendum, which authorized two critical public safety projects. Your trust allows us to move forward with the construction of a *new marine docking facility* for our police and fire rescue vessel and the *rehabilitation of the old fire station*. Both projects are key to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of our emergency response operations, and we are grateful for your continued confidence.

As we approach the summer months, the Town Commission and staff will begin the annual budget development and approval process. We remain fully committed to maintaining our current millage rate—without an increase—and continuing to align all budgetary decisions with our *Five-Year Financial Forecast and Strategic Priorities Plan*. The updated forecast will be presented to the Town Commission on *May 6*, followed by the *first draft of the FY 2025–2026 Budget* presentation on *June 17*. The Financial Advisory Board will conduct its review on *June 24*. While we anticipate some economic headwinds in the coming year, I'm confident that our Town is well-positioned to navigate these challenges while continuing to complete critical infrastructure projects and preserve our strong financial health.



The Hillman Family

On March 13, the Town proudly dedicated our new fire station in memory of former Mayor *Douglas Hillman*, whose leadership and vision were instrumental in the creation of our Fire Rescue Department. The event also served as an opportunity to recognize our outstanding public safety personnel through the Town's inaugural *Public Safety Officer of the Year* awards. This year's honorees included:

- **Police Officer of the Year:** Sergeant David Skrabec
- **Paramedic of the Year:** Raynier Charafardin
- **Firefighter of the Year:** TJ DiGangi



Paramedic of the Year – Raynier Charafardin Officer of the Year - Sergeant David Skrabec Firefighter of the Year – TJ DiGangi

The Commission and I are deeply appreciative of their service, professionalism, and commitment to the safety and well-being of our residents. If you haven't already, I encourage you to visit the fire station lobby to view the plaque honoring Mayor Hillman.

On the infrastructure front, the *A1A Reconstruction Project* continues to move forward, with final completion expected in late summer or early fall. Over the next few months, the Florida Department of Transportation and its contractors will focus on paving, pavement transitions, drainage improvements, and driveway work along the west side of the roadway. We all look forward to the completion of this long-awaited project and the return of smoother travel with fewer disruptions.



Town Commission

In closing, our 75th Anniversary season has been filled with community pride and celebration. From the *Mingle Jingle* and *Fire Station Dedication* to the *Commissioner's Spring Fling*, the *Board Appreciation Luncheon*, and the *Public Safety Awards*, this milestone year has been one of togetherness and progress. As we reflect on Highland Beach's journey since its founding in 1949, I am confident that our Town remains as vibrant and welcoming today as it was then—and will continue to be for generations to come.

With gratitude and commitment,
Marshall Labadie, ICMA-CM
Town Manager

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN HIGHLAND BEACH?

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

- Strategic Priorities – FY2024-25 Updates
- Legislative Update
- Comprehensive Plan Update
- Sanitary Sewer Lining Update
- FDOT RRR Project Updates
- Building Department Recertification Program Update

Board Vacancies

Code Enforcement Board – One (1) vacancy for an unexpired term ending May 30, 2025.

Natural Resources Advisory Board – One (1) vacancy for a three-year term

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

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.

COMMUNITY

Get Involved: Join a Town Advisory Board

The Highland Beach Clerk's Office is accepting applications from residents for Advisory Boards. Ready to make a difference in our "Three Miles of Paradise"? Now is your chance to share your talents and help shape the future of Highland Beach.

Serving on a board is one of the most impactful ways to contribute to local decision-making. Whether you have a background in finance, planning and zoning, construction, business, environmental stewardship – or simply a strong interest in civic involvement – your voice matters. Highland Beach depends on the input and expertise of its residents to maintain the high quality of life we all enjoy.

Why Get Involved?

Here is how you can make an impact by serving:

- **Make a difference** by helping shape the town policies and projects.
- **Stay informed** on key issues and developments.
- **Collaborate** with fellow residents and Town officials.
- **Give back** to the community in a meaningful and rewarding way.

The Town currently has five boards:

Board of Adjustment and Appeals

Code Enforcement

Financial Advisory

Natural Resources Preservation Advisory

Planning Board

Each plays a vital role in supporting the Town Commission and staff with recommendations and ideas. Whether you have served before or are looking to get involved for the first time, we encourage you to apply.

How to Apply

The application is available on the Town's website at <https://highlandbeach-fl.municodemeetings.com/bc/webform/boards-information-and-application> or in the Town Clerk's Office at Town Hall. We welcome applications from all residents who are passionate about Highland Beach and eager to lend their time and insight to community service.

Your town needs your voice. Join us in continuing to make Highland Beach vibrant, welcoming, and well-governed. Apply today, your insights can help shape tomorrow. For more information about the boards, you may visit the Town's website, contact Deputy Town Clerk Jaclyn DeHart at jdehart@highlandbeach.us or Town Clerk Lanelda Gaskins at lgaskins@highlandbeach.us or 561-278-4548.

FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT



Hurricane Season Preparation



We are nearing the time of year where we will all need to once again be “trying to reason with Hurricane Season”. The hurricane season, which begins June 1st and ends November 30th each year, demands serious attention from all Town residents. Each poses a new threat to coastal homeowners and residents. The National Hurricane Center in Coral Gables, Florida, predicts storm movements 72 hours in advance and usually gives 24 to 36 hours’ notice for a hurricane watch and 18 to 24 hours’ notice for a hurricane warning.

Plan Now—Don’t Wait for the Warning

Forecasting technology makes hurricanes the most survivable of natural disasters; however, preparing a plan to follow in the event of a major tropical storm or hurricane is very important to ensure the safety of you and your family. The one- or two-day’s notice of a hurricane watch is not enough time to prepare properly for a hurricane. You need to plan where to go during the storm and what to do afterwards since you may be on your own without help for as long as a month.

Severe damage to personal property can be caused by hurricanes because of high-speed winds and flooding. **FEMA, County and Town Emergency Management Divisions, and your Property Managers urge each of you to be prepared** for possible hurricanes and to follow evacuation orders if given.

Please remember that you are responsible for yourself, your family, and your property. This Hurricane Manual has been prepared for you to use as a guide when making your preparations for the hurricane season. In addition to utilizing this manual, the Town encourages all residents to register for CodeRED, the Town’s emergency communications system. Residents can register to receive notifications by visiting: www.highlandbeach.us/188/CodeRED-Registration.

Evacuation Zone B – What It Means

The Town of Highland Beach is located on a barrier island, and we are designated as a Zone B evacuation area for all categories of hurricanes. Those of you who do not reside here on a full-time basis are strongly advised to prepare and secure your homes, motor vehicles, boats, boat boxes, and docks for the hurricane season prior to leaving the Town. If a hurricane should develop in our area, property managers will be busy securing all common area property, buildings, and the grounds. Most likely, property staff personnel will not be available to help you.

Evacuation Orders and Storm Risks

Evacuation zones are established by the size of the storm and expected flooding for that area. The Palm Beach County Emergency Operations Center will issue evacuation orders by zone. If authorities order an evacuation, the law mandates you must leave if you live in an evacuation zone where there will be flooding. The danger of high velocity winds, which increase in speed at higher elevations, such as upper floors in high-rise buildings, and the storm surge, often 50 miles wide, makes evacuation vital to personal safety. Evacuation is for your safety and that of your family; the combination of high velocity winds, flooding, and storm surges can be deadly.



The Town of Highland Beach will be completely shut down when an evacuation order is given. Prior to a hurricane warning being issued, Town of Highland Beach personnel will be busy securing all common areas and preparing the grounds in the event of a pending hurricane. There is no assurance that Town of Highland Beach personnel would be available to help you.

When the Town Locks Down, Here's What Happens:

- The buildings will be shut down in accordance with the Town of Highland Beach Fire and Police Departments' recommendations. Once the buildings are secured, there will be no electricity in common areas and no elevator service.
- Water, gas, and electricity to the common areas will be shut off in accordance with the hurricane procedures recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- All garage doors will be locked in the down position to prevent damage and theft.
- Once the building has been inspected and locked down, exiting will be very difficult. (Emergency access by Highland Beach Fire Rescue and Highland Beach Police will remain and will be at their discretion).
- There will be no staff on the property.
- There will be no emergency medical service available in the evacuated areas.
- The bridges to the barrier islands will be closed and locked down.
- When the evacuation order is lifted, access to the buildings will not be made available to residents until
 - Damages to the buildings have been assessed and documented
 - The utilities have been restored
 - The buildings are deemed safe for re-entry.

Prepare Your Plan – Now



It is important to prepare a plan for the hurricane season to protect your personal property and, more importantly, to ensure the safety of you and your family. People currently in residence who have not prepared a plan should do so at once.

This plan should include evacuation arrangements for your family, seniors and those with special needs, and pets. It will be necessary to secure boats and automobiles, remove all furniture and loose objects from balconies and decks, close hurricane shutters, and have on hand ample hurricane

supplies including food, water, flashlights, extra batteries, battery-operated radio or television, cash or travelers' checks, and at least two-weeks' worth of medical supplies and prescription medicines.

Soon, we will be rolling out our updated Hurricane Manual as a guide to help with your planning and preparation for the stormy season and possible evacuation from your home. In the interim consider the following.

Careful and thorough consideration of your family's needs will make your hurricane plan a success.

These are things you should do now:

- Develop your evacuation plan and notify all family members of that plan. Your plan should include tentative housing arrangements, both short and long term; transportation arrangements and evacuation route (acquire current and local and state road maps); arrangements for pets.
- Pre-register with the Palm Beach County Division of Emergency Management for the Special Care Unit for persons with medical conditions requiring special needs.
- Designate an out-of-area contact person and provide your contact with details of your evacuation plan, a list of names and phone numbers of relatives, and your cell phone number if you have one.
- Make an inventory, including photographs, of your household goods and store it with other important documents.
- Review insurance policies and update if necessary.
- Compile important documents, including medical insurance cards, copies of all prescriptions, immunization records, copy of personal identification, bank and saving accounts, mortgages and titles, insurance policies, birth certificates, passports, pet registration and immunization records, motor vehicle and boat registrations, phone numbers of family, physicians, pharmacy, caregiver, business contacts, etc. Place all important documents in a secure, waterproof container.
- Have hurricane shutters inspected and repaired if required.
- Make plans to secure your property, including automobiles and boats. If you are away during the hurricane season, make arrangements with someone to secure your property in your absence.
- Have automobiles serviced and kept in good repair. Keep gas tanks full.
- Stock and store medications, including extra prescriptions, oxygen, and other medical supplies as needed.
- Purchase and prepare hurricane supplies and store them in a readily accessible place for evacuation.

Exciting News for Highland Beach Fire Rescue:

Enhancing Emergency Medical Care with the epoc Blood Analysis System!

Highland Beach Fire Rescue is proud to announce a significant enhancement to our emergency medical capabilities with the recent acquisition of the **epoc Blood Analysis System**. This state-of-the-art point-of-care testing (POCT) system will allow our paramedics and emergency medical technicians to perform critical blood tests directly at or near the patient care scene. This means faster access to vital diagnostic information, enabling quicker and more informed decisions regarding patient treatment during those crucial initial moments of an emergency.

The primary benefit of the epoc system is its ability to provide **fast and actionable results**. The epoc Blood Analysis System can measure a range of critical analytes, giving valuable insights into a patient's physiological status. This comprehensive panel of tests assists our team in quickly assessing conditions related to respiration, oxygenation, electrolyte balance, and overall metabolic function, right at the point of care.



By performing blood analysis on-site, we can significantly reduce the time it takes to obtain essential information about a patient's condition compared to traditional laboratory testing. These rapid results can improve **patient outcomes** by allowing our medical personnel to recognize critical events and quickly initiate appropriate life-saving interventions. The system is designed to be **convenient and user-friendly**, requiring **minimal sample volume, operator training, and maintenance**.

The Highland Beach Police and Fire Foundation provided the funds to purchase the equipment. The foundation's support will enable the Highland Beach Fire Department to become the first fire department in Palm Beach County and the third in the nation to deploy this technology in the pre-hospital environment.

Implementing the epoc Blood Analysis System underscores the Highland Beach Fire Rescue's commitment to providing our community with cutting edge emergency medical care. We expect to have the system fully deployed by mid-summer.

Equipping our first responders with this advanced diagnostic tool empowers them to make more informed decisions, initiate timely interventions, and ultimately strive for improved health and well-being for the residents of Highland Beach. Investing in this point-of-care technology will enhance our ability to serve and protect our three miles of paradise.

BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Quiet Season, Busy Improvements in Highland Beach

Spring is here, and with most of our seasonal residents heading north, Highland Beach shifts into a quieter, slower pace. Traffic lightens up, parking gets easier, and the restaurants feel less crowded. For those of us who stay year-round, it is a great time to take a breath and knock out a few projects around the house or condo.

While some people think of home improvement as something only for single-family homes, most Highland Beach residents actually live in mid and high-rise buildings. That does not mean improvements stop. They just take on a different form. Balcony restorations, unit upgrades, lobby refreshes, electrical panel replacements, and waterproofing work are all common this time of year. Associations often take advantage of the reduced foot traffic to schedule projects that are difficult to coordinate during the busy season.

Contractors tend to have more availability right now, and with fewer overall applications coming in, our turnaround times are often faster. That makes it a great time to line up any work you have been putting off. If you are considering a project, check with your association first, then call or email the Building Department. We are happy to walk you through what permits are needed, and when inspections will be required. The earlier you ask, the easier the process will be.

Did you know?

Most permits issued in Highland Beach are for interior work inside condominiums. That includes kitchen and bath remodels, air conditioning replacements, and even small electrical or plumbing upgrades. If you are not sure whether your project requires a permit, reach out and ask. You might be surprised by what does, and what does not.

This is also a good time of year to think ahead. Hurricane season officially starts on June 1. If your windows are older, or your shutters are showing signs of wear, now is the time to start addressing it. Storm protection is only effective if it is properly installed and maintained. That applies to both single-family homes and multifamily buildings. The earlier you act, the less you will have to worry when the forecasts start rolling in.

Just because things have gotten quieter around town does not mean we are slowing down. The Building Department is here, available, and working to support the residents, contractors, and associations that help make Highland Beach one of the most well-maintained coastal towns in Florida.

Code Tip of the Month: Tree Trimming Practices

The terms "hurricane cut," "hat-racking," and "tree topping" describe illegal and unsafe tree pruning practices that are commonly applied to palms and other tree species to manage their growth. These techniques, which involve removing large portions of a tree's canopy, severely compromise its structural integrity and overall health. The consequences of such improper trimming include heightened vulnerability to pathogens, fungal infections, and insect infestations, all of which can lead to the decline or premature death of the tree. Beyond the ecological implications, property owners who engage in or permit these harmful practices may be subject to substantial fines and corrective measures. This is due to the critical importance of preserving the urban tree canopy, which plays a key role in maintaining biodiversity, enhancing environmental quality, and promoting sustainable urban ecosystems.

Homeowners often ask landscapers to trim their trees to give them a certain shape, or property managers may have the tops of trees cut off, so they don't block views from higher floors of a building. However, these practices can harm the tree by removing too many leaves and main branches, which can lead to a lack of nutrients. When this happens, trees may grow back with a heavier, denser top, but a weaker root system, making them more likely to fall during a storm. In some cases, trees are trimmed before a hurricane, with the goal of reducing wind resistance. For example, palm trees are often trimmed to remove everything except the top fronds, creating what's called a "Lion's tail" look. However, this practice takes away important nutrients and the tree's ability to perform photosynthesis, making it less healthy overall and not providing any real protection against a hurricane.

It's completely okay to trim trees to prevent hazards like interference with roofs, power lines, or pathways. However, it's important to let trees grow naturally and only thin them using proper methods so they stay strong in high winds and grow back healthily. Before deciding how to trim your tree, it's a good idea to reach out to the Town's Code Compliance Division at 561-278-4540 or hire a Licensed/Certified Arborist to ensure the trimming is done properly and safely.

To Reduce Impacts To Sea Turtles From Beach Furniture:

• Remove furniture from the beach nightly

At night, furniture should be completely removed from the beach and stored behind the primary dune. Please remember, **heavy equipment is not allowed on the beach during nesting season.** When possible, all furniture should be moved by hand.

• Stack and arrange furniture

Marine turtles prefer to nest on the mid to upper beach, protecting their nest from the high tide. Furniture that is left on the beach at night can prevent nesting turtles from reaching the upper beach (See Figure 1). If furniture can not be removed at night, it should be stacked to minimize interference with nesting or hatchling sea turtles (See Figure 2).

Arrange the stacked furniture with the shortest edge facing the shoreline.

Figure 1

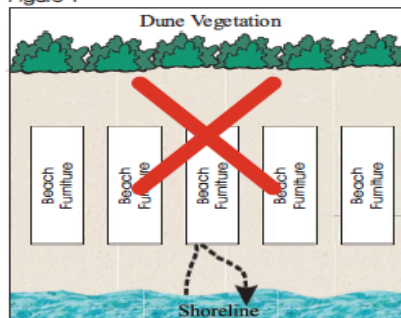
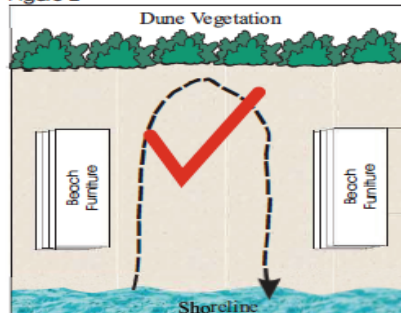


Figure 2



• Place furniture properly

No furniture should be placed on the beach until a nesting survey has been completed by a Marine Turtle Permit Holder, who will identify and mark nests. Place furniture **at least 5 feet from any marked nest.**

Furniture should not be placed on salt-resistant vegetation or on the dunes.

• Use an umbrella holder or sleeve

To the degree possible, avoid burying umbrella poles during sea turtle nesting season. Either anchor an umbrella holder or sleeve before the nesting season to use throughout the summer, or use umbrellas that clamp directly to the furniture.

If you see someone disturbing a sea turtle nest or see a dead, injured or harassed sea turtle, please call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 1-888-404-FWCC.

For more information on sea turtle nesting, please contact Ingrid Allen, Town Planner, at 561-278-4540 (ext. 3).

LIBRARY

Library News – May/June 2025

We will miss our snowbirds as they leave for the summer, but don't forget that our digital materials are accessible from anywhere. With your library card, ebooks, audiobooks, magazines, and our new Kanopy streaming service are all just a click away. If you are staying in town for the summer, we have lots of activities to keep you entertained.

Summer Movies at the Library

Join us on selected Tuesdays at 5:30 pm to enjoy a movie on the big screen.

- May 6: White Bird
- May 20: Perfect Days
- June 3: Air
- June 17: Love Again

Upcoming Concerts

- April 24 at 5:30 pm: Duo Beaux Arts (classical piano)
- May 1 at 5:45 pm: Skobin Duo (classical/Rhapsody in Blue/West Side Story)
- June 5 at 5:30 pm: Latin Jazz (quartet)

Art Exhibit

Our next art exhibit features paintings and cartoons by Marisa Acocella and underwater photography by Mark Kosarin. Meet the artists at the opening reception on Thursday, May 8 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. Light refreshments will be provided by the Friends of the Library.

Other Activities:

- Learn to download ebooks and stream movies call for appointment
- Current Events Discussion Group: Saturdays at 10:30 am
- Small Fry Story Time plus Crafts on Wednesdays at 4:30 pm, ages 4 and up
- Toddler Time: Stories and Rhymes on 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

TOWN OF HIGHLAND BEACH – LEADERSHIP TEAM



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Madison Noonan



Building Official

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Carol Holland



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Lanelda Gaskins

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Deputy Town Clerk

Jaclyn DeHart



Public Works Director

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Asst. Public Works Director

Sergio Gonzalez Jr.



Police Chief

Craig Hartmann

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Administrative Assistant

Deborah Holden



Library Director

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Fire Chief

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Matthew Welhaf

TOWN COMMISSION



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