

TOWN OF HIGHLAND BEACH • MAR/APR 2024

MANAGER'S MONTHLY



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MESSAGE FROM YOUR MANAGER

Another remarkable season draws to a close, filled with enduring friendships, enchanting beach experiences, and the creation of cherished memories within our ***Three Miles of Paradise***. While the season gently winds down for many, a new chapter unfolds for our Fire Rescue Department starting on May 1st. This commencement symbolizes years of hard work and community engagement, forging a world-class Fire Rescue Department dedicated to the health and safety of our residents.

As the season concludes, it also heralds the beginning of sea turtle nesting season, with threatened sea turtle species returning to Highland Beach for its welcoming environment, magical sunrises, and pristine sandy beaches.

I am honored to continue serving as your Town Manager, dedicated to ensuring Highland Beach remains your preferred destination and cherished home. All of us are committed to being here for you whenever you return, ready to facilitate the ongoing creation of memories and the enjoyment of the wonders within our ***Three Miles of Paradise***. Your connection to Highland Beach is a vital part of our community's fabric, and we look forward to being a constant in your life's journey.



Milani Park Update

On February 1st, Palm Beach County Commissioner Woodward and staff hosted a public hearing on the proposed Milani Park Project in our Library Community Room, drawing over 300 residents who passionately shared their thoughts and concerns. Residents highlighted issues such as safety, traffic, parking, sea turtle nesting, and onsite Native American cultural resources.

The Town Commission aligns with the overwhelming majority of residents, expressing reservations about the park's construction, advocating for either a significant reduction in scope or, preferably, no construction at all. The Commission has actively lobbied County Commissioners, particularly our District Commissioner, who strongly supports the park's construction.

On February 6th, the Town Commission passed a resolution urging the County to consider selling the park property and reallocating the proceeds to other park and/or public purpose projects countywide, addressing the needs of a larger population. The Commission also stands behind Mayor Moore as she meets with County Commissioners, communicating our collective stance against the park's construction.

We deeply appreciate all residents who voiced their concerns, and despite the uphill battle, we are steadfast in our commitment to pursuing strategic actions to ensure our message is heard and thoroughly considered.

I find encouragement in the unwavering determination of the Town Commission and our residents as we collaboratively oppose a project that was initiated over 35 years ago and authorized by a court order decades ago.

A1A Road Project Update

- The project will commence approximately April 3rd. The contractor has not decided where the project will begin, but once it is decided that information will be shared with the community.
- The project duration is approximately 353 days, not taking into account holidays, weather delays, and any other unforeseen instances.
- There will be disruption to landscaping in many areas, such as the removal of shrubs and other vegetation that exists in the current right of way.
- There will be five trees removed due to the project, all others will remain in place or will be relocated.
- The construction is limited to between 1000 and 2000 feet of work at a time to minimize the lane closures and subsequent traffic delays.
- FDOT will provide weekly updates, including the address of where work will be done for that particular week so that residents can prepare in advance.
- There will be flagmen directing traffic during the lane closures.
- FDOT is going to engage Palm Beach County to see if there can be modifications to the traffic signal at Linton Boulevard in an effort to keep traffic moving as much as possible.
- The bridges are outside the scope of the project and therefore cannot have their schedules altered to alleviate traffic delays.
- The contractor will have open communication with the Police Chief and Fire Chief to ensure that emergency vehicles may respond to calls expeditiously.
- There will be signage along A1A that will alert drivers of road work ahead and expect traffic delays. The Town has also requested signage to be placed on the outer limits of the Town, on both the north and south ends, to permit local traffic only.
- Cyclists and pedestrians will be allowed to travel through the project area during the project. In the areas where work is being completed, they may be redirected, so please be careful when walking, cycling, and driving during the project.
- During hurricane season, should the Town experience any inclement weather, construction will be halted to allow residents to safely evacuate.



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN HIGHLAND BEACH?

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

- Strategic Priorities – FY2024 Updates
- Continued discussion of Milani Park
- Continued discussion of marine facilities ordinance amendments
- Review of updated beach feasibility study
- Discussion of code violation process
- Discussion of old fire station project

Board Vacancies

Board of Adjustment & Appeals – One (1) vacancy for an unexpired term ending September 2024, and one (1) upcoming vacancy for a three-year term.

Natural Resources Preservation Advisory Board – Upcoming vacancies for three-year terms.

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



Board Member Spotlight – Michael Thorson

For the past 20 years, Michael has resided in Highland Beach with his wife of nearly 17 years, Jennifer. An SIU graduate with a BA in International Business, Michael is the co-founder of a consulting firm that empowers nonprofits through strategic fundraising initiatives. He has helped to raise over \$100 million for charitable causes, including Alzheimer's Community Care, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Catholic Church. A six-time Boston Marathon participant, Michael believes in pushing boundaries and achieving goals. He shares his wife's passion for travel, and together

they've explored over 60 countries across five continents! Today, he balances his success as a nonprofit consultant with his passion for travel by curating unique travel experiences for others. Michael is excited to bring his combined expertise in business and community engagement to the Board of Adjustments & Appeals, and is eager to contribute to its mission and impact.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Officer of the Year

Congratulations to Officer Paul Shersty on being presented with the 2023 Highland Beach PD Officer of the Year award. We are proud to have an officer with your integrity and dedication protecting and serving our Three Miles of Paradise!



IRS Phone Scams – Don't be a Victim!

With tax season upon us, we want to urge our residents to beware of IRS phone scams. 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 or gift cards!

Public Safety Support

After watching a news story about a new piece of safety equipment for law enforcement, long time Highland Beach resident Ron Bennett contacted the Police Department and said our officers should be equipped with this gear and then donated \$2,500 to the Highland Beach Police & Fire Foundation to purchase it.

The news story that piqued Mr. Bennett's interest was on a police officer that was seriously injured after being hit by a car while performing a traffic stop. As a result of the accident, a strobe light called the Guardian Angel was developed. This strobe light clips to the officer's vest and is activated when they need it to make them more visible during situations like directing traffic, working accidents, and conducting traffic stops. The Guardian Angel can also be used as a beacon and flashlight for the officers.

The Highland Beach Police Department would like to thank Mr. Bennett for his concern and support for our public safety personnel!



FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT

"Firefighter paramedics began reporting to work on Monday, March 4th, 2024, to begin training and orientation with the Town of Highland Beach. The orientation has acquainted them with the town, the new equipment, and the new fire station. This will enable them to be prepared and well-equipped to face any emergency situations that may arise in the area and to provide the necessary assistance to ensure the safety and well-being of the community.



Our upcoming station is being outfitted with cutting-edge equipment and the latest technology to enable swift and efficient emergency response. This state-of-the-art facility will be dedicated to serving and supporting the community, providing top-notch services and amenities.

The fire station will serve as a crucial base for our firefighter paramedics and a hub for the community to learn about fire safety and participate in outreach programs. We plan to utilize this space to educate and engage our residents on the importance of fire prevention and response while fostering a sense of community and connection between our firefighters and those they serve.

Our team is immensely grateful for the unwavering support and generous funding we received from our elected officials, Town Management, and our residents. We look forward to serving and protecting our community from this new and improved facility. Thank you for your continued support!" – Glenn Joseph, Fire Chief

BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Highland Beach Building Official's Insight: Navigating Current Challenges in the Construction Industry

As your Building Official, I am committed to informing you about the dynamics affecting our local construction and remodeling sector. Recent trends have highlighted a rise in consumer complaints and challenges faced by contractors, which are crucial for our community to understand.

The Labor Shortage Impact

One of the most pressing issues is the labor shortage in the construction industry. This national trend, as identified by the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), indicates a need for nearly half a million additional workers. This shortage extends to skilled trades, where we've seen a decline in younger workers entering these professions. This not only limits the availability of contractors but also impacts the quality of work, an aspect crucial for our town's development and maintenance.

Material Costs and Supply Chain Disruptions

Our contractors are also grappling with increased material costs and supply chain disruptions, which have escalated since 2022. The cost of construction materials rose by over 7% last year, outpacing general

inflation. These issues have led to project delays and logistical challenges, directly affecting project timelines and budgets in our community.

Navigating Post-Pandemic Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to leave its mark on the industry. Contractors are still dealing with financial repercussions from the necessary health and safety measures implemented during the pandemic. These ongoing challenges emphasize the need for diligence and adaptability in our town's construction practices.

Importance of Contractor Licensing

The disparities in contractor licensing standards across different states significantly impact the quality of work and consumer protection. In Highland Beach, we strive to uphold high standards to ensure quality and reliability in construction services. Our approach aligns with examples like California, where stringent licensing has led to fewer consumer complaints and better service quality.

Our Commitment to You

As we navigate these complex challenges, my office remains dedicated to ensuring the highest standards in construction and remodeling within Highland Beach. We are continually working to adapt to these industry shifts, ensuring that our local regulations and practices align with the goal of providing you with reliable, high-quality construction services.

I encourage you to stay informed and engaged with these developments as they impact our town's growth and infrastructure. Please contact my office at (561) 278-4548 with any concerns or questions regarding construction projects in our area.

Code Tip of the Month: Complaint Reporting

The Town of Highland Beach's Code Compliance Department works to ensure the community is kept clean and safe for all residents and visitors to the Town. The Code Compliance Department can address many issues and concerns that residents may have, such as nuisances on properties that may cause unsafe situations, blight that could affect property values, and/or identifying/stopping unpermitted construction.

The Code Compliance Department of Highland Beach operates proactively when code violations are apparent and publicly visible from a right-of-way, however, many code violations may only be visible from a neighboring property or within a condominium. This is where community involvement becomes a critical part of addressing problems and bringing properties into compliance. The State of Florida has passed House Bill 883, which bans anonymous code complaints, effective July 1st, 2021. Persons who file complaints with the Town are required to provide their name and address for any non-life safety complaints.

If you would like to report a potential code violation or have questions about the Town of Highland Beach Code of Ordinances, please contact the Code Compliance Department at 561-278-4540.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Solid Waste Rate Increase

Please be advised that on June 1st a 7% rate increase will go into effect for all commercial and residential recyclable, solid waste, and yard trash services in accordance with the Town's agreement with Waste Management for Solid Waste and Recycling Collection Services.

Recycle Right!

The Natural Resources Preservation Advisory Board and Public Works Department would like to remind residents that recycling is one of the most impactful ways that a community can express environmental consciousness. Here are some tips from the Solid Waste Authority on how to Recycle Right:

Yellow Bins

- Flatten any cardboard.
- No plastic bags.
- No material with food stains.
- Newspapers, mail, and magazines are accepted!

Blue Bins

- Keep lids on plastic bottles or containers and milk or juice cartons.
- Clean out food and beverage cans.
- Take lids off glass bottles and jars.
- Do not include any straws.

Prohibited Items (Including but not Limited to)

- Needles*
- Lithium batteries*
- Styrofoam
- Aluminum foil
- Light bulbs
- Plastic bags
- Paper plates

Asterisk-marked items may not be disposed of in trash or recycle bins and require special disposal.



swa.org/recycleright



PLANNING AND ZONING



DID YOU KNOW that Highland Beach has more annual sea turtle nests than Boca Raton and Delray Beach? In anticipation of the upcoming sea turtle nesting season (March 1st – October 31st), it is important to keep your distance from sea turtles and their nests on the beach. Sea turtles are protected, so you should allow hatchlings to crawl toward the ocean on their own. Any interference or disturbance, including getting too

close, can cause hatchlings to become confused and lose their way. Their trek to the water from their nest is part of the process that helps them orient themselves to their surroundings and for females to remember their home beach.

Bright lights from buildings, cellphones, or cameras can cause them 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.

You can make a difference for Florida's sea turtles. 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. If you are 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.

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 new Sea Turtle Lighting Ordinance, please contact Town Planner Ingrid Allen at 561-637-2012 or iallen@highlandbeach.us.

LIBRARY

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

You already know you can borrow books from the library, but what else can you do with a Highland Beach library card? Here are five benefits of having a library card that might convince you to sign up for one if you haven't already:

- Get access to digital books, audiobooks, and magazines 24/7, even when you are out of town.
- Socialize and make new friends at an activity or event.
- Pick up children's books, DVDs, and craft kits for the grandkids when they come to visit.
- Use our computers and WiFi (many people don't have printers today – use ours!)
- Check out a jigsaw puzzle to do at home.

Upcoming concerts (all at 5:30 PM):

- April 4th: Duo Formosa (piano and violin)
- April 18th: Totem Cave (jazz)

Other activities:

- Dancercise: Mondays at 5:30 PM, \$5 fee
- Open eBook help: 5:00 - 7:00 PM on the first Tuesday of the month
- 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





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