

From the Mayor's Desk

From the May, 2008 Tybee Breeze:

Hope everyone had a nice April. I don't know about you, but I was amazed to see so many people headed to the beach so early and especially amazed when I saw all the little kids taking a dip in the Atlantic when the water's still so cold.

We had yet another busy month. The Georgia Department of Transportation's paving project was completed on time. It was not uneventful, though, as an accident during construction led to Highway 80 being closed. And, of course, it happened on a busy, sunny Saturday, which led to traffic congestion, re-routing of cars on the north end, etc. The road sure does look nice but it's safe to say that we're all happy the work is complete.

Also, the 16th Street/Strand project is complete. This project came in over budget but was completed sooner than anticipated. Council approved several amendments to the original budget for the project for everything from landscaping for portable restrooms near 17th street to an underground water tank that was discovered during construction. Funds to pay for the additional costs came from the city's portion of the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). In the end, my own opinion is that the project was a worthwhile one that Tybee can be proud of and has made a significant improvement to the appearance, infrastructure and traffic flow of the area.

On the rumor mill front, I have overheard discussions concerning the future location of a proposed public safety building. As you know, our police station is located on the north end near the Department of Public Works while the Fire Station is in Memorial Park. In 2006, the City lobbied the county to obtain a substantial increase in Tybee's share of the new SPLOST. We received \$8,000,000 from these negotiations—normally, cities get an allotment based on their population, which for Tybee is about 1.5% of Chatham County, a figure which would have netted Tybee only about \$3,000,000. The City determined that one of the items we would fund with these monies was a new public safety facility. A committee of knowledgeable citizens was established and their first decision was to hire a firm to determine the best location for such a facility. One of the issues that was brought up in their discussions was the possibility of a more centrally-located police station. I guess this is where the rumors started. In any event, the current status is that the City is waiting for the firm's analysis and we will move forward from there. But in the end, the City Council will decide where such a facility would be located. And they will of course take into consideration input from the public.

The Tour De Georgia breezed through Tybee a few weekends ago. Many thanks to all the citizens who volunteered for this exciting event. Special thanks to Brannyn Allen for all her work in coordinating Tybee's involvement in the event. She did a great job of making sure we rolled out the proverbial red carpet...

We owe a special thanks to State Senator Eric Johnson for his efforts at ensuring that an additional \$1,000,000 in the state budget for the beach renourishment project. We asked for additional funds in light of the strong possibility of higher than anticipated costs thanks in large part to higher diesel fuel prices. Senator Johnson worked very hard to get these funds placed in the proposed budget and Representative Burke Day and Ron Stephens made certain the money stayed in on the House side. It is now in the Governor's hands for his approval. Should he elect to keep this money in the budget, the City and its taxpayer's will not have to foot the bill for an additional million dollars—a very significant amount of money for our little island and funds which can be appropriated for other projects, such as removing the old rip-rap and sea wall which has become exposed on Tybee's north end, causing significant public safety hazards for our residents and visitors.

I had the chance to visit with our members of Congress to thank them for their support of the renourishment funding. I was able to meet with the ranking minority leader of the House Appropriations Committee, Dave Hobson (Ohio) who, according to Jack Kingston, was instrumental in obtaining our much-appreciated \$6,300,000 federal contribution and presented him with a very nice piece of Tybee artwork.

Last but certainly not least, I was out of town for the meeting when the dog park was discussed. All I can say is that I hope that we can all put our heads together and come up with a reasonable compromise.

Have a wonderful month. Mayor's Night In will be on Tuesday, May 13 from 6 to 8 PM. Please contact Vivian Woods at 786-4573, ext. 103 for an appointment.