

# From the Mayor's Desk

From the July 2008 Tybee Breeze:

I hope you are all having a nice summer so far. Despite the lagging economy, Tybee seems to busier than ever.

Before getting into city-related issues, I wanted to mention that Tybee lost one of its long-time residents in mid-June. Many of you probably knew Johnny Jarvis when he was younger and able to be involved in Beach Sweeps and virtually all aspects of civic life on our Island. He loved this Island and had many friends on Tybee. What a great guy! I met him later in his life and only knew him as my bocce ball partner on Sunday afternoons. Quite something to have a guy in his 80's who wheels his oxygen tank behind him have to carry a guy 50 years his junior on his back every single game. Johnny will be sorely missed by all who knew and loved him.

Something else I wanted to mention before getting down to business—the Men's Prayer Breakfast meets the first Saturday of every month at the Methodist Church (911 Butler Avenue). It's interdenominational so don't worry if you're not a member of the Methodist Church (my wife and I are St. Michael's folks). We start at 9:00 AM and eat breakfast while listening to whomever the invited speaker happens to be. We recently heard from Michael Berkow, Chief of the Savannah-Chatham County Police Department and Demery Bishop who coordinates our region's Crimestoppers Program. We take turns cooking and cleaning and you can be guaranteed to be out the door by 10 AM. Try to come out if you can. We'd love to have you.

Several improvements to Highway 80 will be made in the near future. As you know, the road was recently re-paved. In the fall, new crosswalks will be installed as well. We had hoped that the Department of Transportation would be able to do the re-paving and the crosswalks at the same time. Unfortunately, they were not able to do so. This project is scheduled for October. Those of you who walk, jog, and bike will also be happy to learn that the City is planning on completely re-doing the sidewalks—all the way from Byers on Highway 80 to 16<sup>th</sup> Street. This is also supposed to include curb cuts as well. Many of you have gotten so fed up with the condition of the sidewalks that you simply use the road itself. But these lanes are often packed with parked cars. It is unbelievably difficult navigating the curbs and sidewalks if you are pushing a stroller or riding a bike. It is impossible if you are handicapped. These curb cuts and the new sidewalks will go a long way towards making Tybee a more pedestrian, bike, and handicapped-friendly community. Much of the funding will come from a state grant our City Manager helped secure for Tybee a few months ago.

As mentioned in some of my previous columns, The Fort Screven Water Line Project will be starting soon. Check the City's website for more information about how you may be impacted by this Project. It is long, long overdue...

You may have noticed an increase in your water/sewer/trash bill recently. This was the result of the City Council's wise decision to finally stop subsidizing trash collection. For years, the City has paid a large portion of citizen's trash collection bills. The City is supposed to collect what Waste Management actually charges the City's residents and businesses. Hence the hopefully temporary increase in the bills. In the meantime, we are investigating other alternatives by bidding trash collection out to other providers. We will keep you posted.

If you own property on Tybee, you probably recently received your property tax statement from the County. As I try to remind people, not only does the City have a very low millage rate (3.7 compared to 12 for the City of Savannah), we also have a \$200,000 homestead exemption. So if you locked in your home at under \$200,000 for the Stephens-Day exemption, you pay nothing to the City of Tybee. It also should be noted that, given the astronomical increases in assessments on Tybee of late, Stephens-Day is saving Tybee residents a ton of money on their tax bills.

Hurricane season is upon us. I have included a map of what happened to coastal Georgia in the 1890s. All these storms were category 3 or above. We often hear about how coastal Georgia is somehow protected from hurricanes due to the shape of the coast. As the map clearly shows, the reality is that we have simply been lucky for the last hundred years. That decade, Tybee impacted 4 storms that made landfall at Category 3 strength or higher. The storms of 1893 and 1898 were particularly deadly. Also, please remember that our road sits precipitously close to sea level. It doesn't take much for our only evacuation route to be covered in water. If you've ever read first-hand accounts from the survivors of the 1898 hurricane, Tybee is not a good place to ride out a storm. We are extremely vulnerable to storm surge due the low depth of the ocean adjacent to our coastline. To emphasize this point, we recently placed signs (the colored and numbered poles you see at City Hall, the South End and the North Beach Parking lot) showing that much of Tybee would be under water with even a Category 1 storm. So please make certain that to heed warnings and leave the Island when an evacuation is called for.

Finally, if you see any of our Department of Public Works employees, please give them a pat on the back for all their hard work. They do a great job of keeping our beach and our City clean despite the onslaught of day-trippers and tourists, some of whom elect to leave more than their footprints behind.

Hope to see you at the Fireworks. Have a great Fourth of July!

Mayor's Night In will be July 8<sup>th</sup> from 6 until 8 PM. Please contact Vivian Woods for an appointment at 786-4573 ext. 103.