

From the Mayor's Desk - 12/13/24:

Happy Friday!

Thanks to all attending the City Council meeting this week. One comment on the Zoom meeting, we can and will work on the A/V at City Hall, but honestly that isn't a top priority for us right now with all that is going on. The "to do" list has many other big ticket items that need attention which I hope that everyone can understand. I urge anyone local to come to the meetings in person to ensure that you can engage properly before we can address the Zoom meeting quality.

The Groins Project: As promised last week, I planned and expected to be providing a detailed update on this project today. We should have some additional updates and knowledge upcoming next week that will provide much more detail and answer your questions much better. So, if you'll excuse me... please wait just one more week for a complete update on the status of the Groins Project. I appreciate your patience on this one!

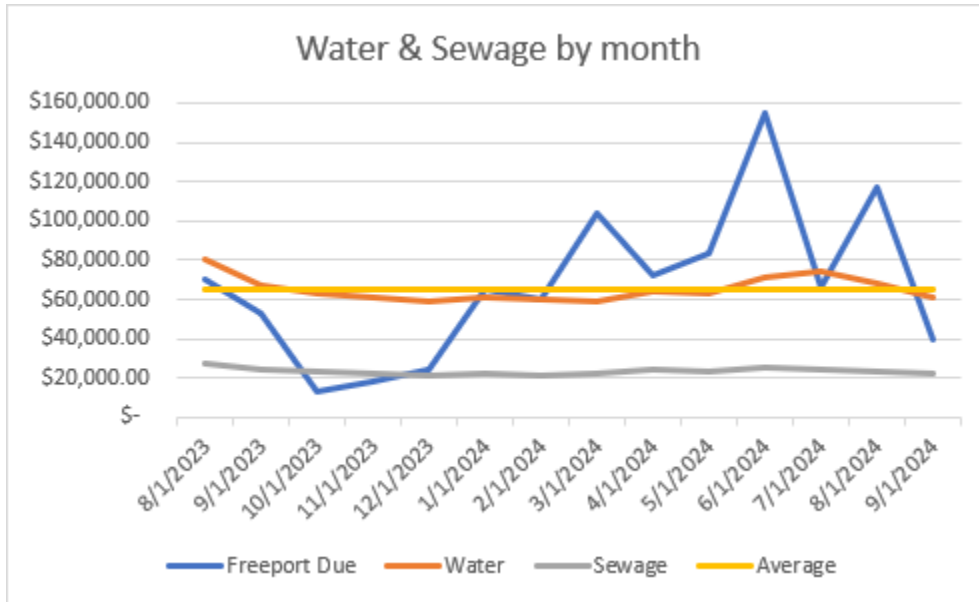
The first round of court dates were held at City Hall today for violations of remittance of hotel occupancy taxes (HOT). Again, anyone failing to comply with hotel tax remittance to Village of Surfside Beach will be receiving a court date. We have a list of roughly 150 addresses to start. If you believe that you may be in violation of remittance of this local HOT, I suggest that you contact City Hall and clear it up prior to any legal action. Mistakes happen! Please spread the word to save people the headaches.

True Operating Cost of Water, Sewer & Garbage:

As shared last week, our operating expenses for both water and sewer have been exceeding the collection of income from our water/sewer/garbage bills. The gap between water bill collections and water operating expenses was over 20% short. The water bill proposed increase was discussed in detail at this week's council meeting, and a decision was made and approved by council to increase water bill by 10%. That would be about \$4 per month for the average single family home.

Below is a chart shared at the council meeting. What I want to highlight from this chart is that the usage of Freeport water, and the high costs associated with that water source, increases in the 6 month period between March – August. It makes sense, as we have a massive increase in tourists and beach house visitors in this period. Important to understand that in order to afford to deliver water to homes in March – August of 2025, it will cost us more than we will be collecting in water

bills, even with the 10% increase approved by council. We will have to continue to find solutions to this problem prior to March.



Public Works:

There has been a great collaboration of Beach & Parks and the Public Works Departments to find and uncover dozens of the buried water meters. This effort continues until we get all of them in working order and visible to the meter reader crews. Thanks to both departments for working together on this project!

We have both vacuum pumps and all 3 sewer lines up and running in the vacuum sewer system. Please call the numbers listed for any pump outs or repairs needed.

Beach & Parks:

Plans are in place, and money is available in Beach Fund budget, to purchase and place hay bales (small square ones) on the dunes during the Christmas tree placing in January. Our Beach & Parks employees will work in concert with the SOBA group to fortify the dunes and allow for sand buildup with nourishment for vegetation growth from the hay. This dune mitigation activity will require GLO permitting, of which Josh is spearheading from the Building Department. Assuming this dune mitigation project does improve the growth of healthy beach dunes, then this project will become an annual Hay-Christmas event in January. A point of note... SOBA could use the volunteers for this labor intensive activity, so please flex your muscles for the beach in January by helping out!

Human Resources:

Our new Utilities Clerk, Breana Renee Wied will be starting a little bit later this month. Please help to welcome Breana to Surfside Beach if you see her at City Hall.

Safety/Risk:

We had a site visit from FEMA this week on Tuesday & Wednesday to evaluate Beryl damages primarily to the roads. In addition we discussed the possible mitigation efforts that could exist in the fairly immediate future. For example, replacing Beach drive (and other roads) with an improved foundation and a concrete surface, instead of blacktop overlayments. This was a great collaborative visit, and I want to thanks the representatives from FEMA for taking the time to work with us in Surfside Beach for the 2 days. In addition, thanks to Mayor Bisso, Janet, Toby, and John for working hand in hand with FEMA for 2 full days.

Other items of Interest:

Another reminder that the Early Bird beach pass will be available on January 2nd – 31st at City Hall for the discounted rate of \$15. This is limited to one per person, with a valid drivers license. After January, they go up to the full price of \$30. Act fast!

As mentioned before, we will be planning for and posting notice for a townhall meeting to openly discuss the water and sewer systems we currently have in Surfside Beach. The goal will be to educate the community about our inherent issues, answer your questions, and then openly discuss future solutions. Everyone should expect to walk away with a better understanding of Surfside's infrastructure as it is today, and also what is required to improve it long term.

As always, take care of yourself and each other.

Hope to see you around the island this weekend!

Zach