

From the Mayor's desk – 2/14/25

Happy Friday and Happy Valentines Day

Sorry for the radio silence on these weekly reports but just returned from a vacation this week. I'm tan, rested and ready!

First and foremost...We have finally finally finally gotten FEMA to accept our disaster relief Category A totals from hurricane Beryl. That is step one to receive our Category A relief funds. This week we also hosted TDEM to walk through the next steps to submit a Request for Reimbursement (RFR) and also agreed upon their commitment to process payment minus the receivables from Ike. Let me explain that a bit, because it is complicated. Years ago, we received disaster relief for Ike, but also received insurance payments for Ike. That's double dipping and FEMA & TDEM are requiring that we pay back the overpayment from Ike that insurance also paid to us. That amount is \$97,140 and is required to be paid back by Surfside to FEMA/TDEM. In our meeting with TDEM this week we were able to modify their original request which required our repayment of the \$97k BEFORE they would release the Category A funds. Now representatives from TDEM have committed to personally helping with the RFR submission and then hand carrying the RFR through their process. Which includes deducting the \$97k from our relief funds total without requiring Surfside to first pay back that large Ike receivables amount. We expect to see disaster relief funds by early March that will be as follows: Category A total (\$523,072) minus Ike receivables (\$97,140) = \$425,932 total. Once we receive these relief funds, we will pay outstanding debts that we have been carrying due to Beryl, and then we start funding much needed repairs. For example, our roads!!

Public Works:

Freeport water update. The City Council of Freeport voted to accept our payment plan and will continue to supply Surfside with water. The plan we submitted pledged to stay current with all water bills and pay an additional \$50,000 each month.

Erick and the team have worked to shut off supply from Freeport since January 22nd. There may be some low flow issues, so as always, please contact Erick or City Hall with any concerns. They need to know and Facebook posts just won't create work orders to address issues.

Overdue water bills to City of Surfside. We have over \$60,000 in overdue water bills. We aren't one to talk, as we owe Freeport a substantial amount, but just as we are taking care of our bill to Freeport with a payment plan, we need to ask folks that are overdue to either pay their bill or agree to a payment plan with us. Our suggestion is to make your account current or agree to a payment plan by end of March. Fire hydrant painting project has begun this week.

Human Resources:

Seasonal employment for Beach will be hiring. If interested, please contact City Hall.

All employees are meeting next week to review new and improved HR policies that will include Complaints/Grievances, Hiring/Terminations and Attendance. Much needed to help City employees know what is expected of them and what to do if they have concerns or issues. Thanks to Janet for creating these documents with the help of a few members of the community with HR career experience. More HR policy cleanup and improvement are still to come.

All interviews were completed for the Chief of Police this week. We will reconvene as Council to discuss recommendations and possible actions in the coming weeks. Not much more to share at this time.

Building:

Progress at both the crabbing pier and Stahlman walkover continues.

Beach & Parks:

Gearing up for the Beach season with hiring upcoming for seasonal trash pickup, booth attendants, and walking trash pickers.

With the disaster funds on the horizon and the weather starting to warm up, we will be also gearing up for road repairs. Priority will be placed on those with the most substantial damage, those with most traffic flow, and as always those that the community at large feel are important. Please provide input to Toby in Beach or any of your council members. Also, be patient. We have a limited crew and will outsource some work as we can, but this will take some time to repair all the damaged roads.

Other Items of Interest:

The fire! Just to catch up on the house fire that took a vacant home that was well publicized a few weeks ago. Not much that can be shared, but rest assured there is an active investigation into cause of fire.

The fire #2! Hay bales seem to be spontaneously combusting on the beach. We will be making a change to our ordinance that currently prohibits burning of Christmas trees to read "burning of dune mitigation materials". Currently we can only instruct and educate those who light haybales on fires not to do so, but we cannot enforce that act as a violation of ordinance.

In closing, I've been asked by several people about the possibility of my candidacy for Mayor in the May election. I have been steadfast that I cannot continue, primarily due to the stress of managing my losing battle of balancing Mayor duties and my real Dow job. As of this morning, the last day of submission, there were no candidates for Mayor turned in and as a result, I did submit my packet to be a candidate. It may shave years off my life, but I do feel obligated to continue to help the employees and citizens of Surfside Beach. I do love it in this wonderfully quirky village!

Happy Valentines Day to all and I hope to see you around the island this weekend!

Thanks,
Zach