

Town of Ponce Inlet
Mayor's State of the Town Address
January 2016

With the start of a fresh New Year, many of us reflect on the prior year. The Town does this as well and we provide this information to you through an annual Address.

As always, we'll start with providing you information on the financial health of our Town. We have a general fund reserve of approximately \$2.3 million dollars, which equates to a little over 6 months of our current expenses. The Town's established goal is to keep the general fund reserve between 3 and 9 months of operating expenses. The Town's total millage rate continues to be the fourth lowest out of the 17 taxing districts in Volusia County, a half-mill lower than our neighboring unincorporated area Wilbur-by-the-Sea and almost two mills lower than our nearest incorporated neighbor, Daytona Beach Shores. We continue to meet our stated mission to provide you with excellence in service delivery while ensuring citizens obtain the greatest value for their tax dollar.

One of the more recent means of service delivery improvement has been the patient transport service that our fire department provides. The majority of the revenue from Ponce Inlet transport users has been returned to Ponce Inlet via this program for the last few years, thereby allowing the enhancement of this service to you at a nominal cost. Ponce Inlet is one of only two municipalities in Volusia County to provide this additional service to its residents. We have now been doing so for a little over three years, transporting approximately 570 patients in total. You may not be aware that this program came about due to the incredible generosity of the late Constance Hunter, as she donated the funding for the purchase of the Town's first ambulance. It was her hope that the Town would someday be allowed to perform emergency medical transport and prevent its citizens from having to wait while a County ambulance made its way to our distant barrier island community. If not for her belief in this program, the Town would not have been in the position to assume this responsibility when it was offered and now have a proven track record of success and reliability. In 2015, the Town purchased a larger used ambulance that will be our primary transport vehicle. Our gratitude to Mrs. Hunter continues as half of the cost of refurbishing our original ambulance is being covered by a grant from her estate, so that we may keep it operational for backup as needed.

In recognition of Mrs. Hunter, the front portion of Timucuan Oaks Garden was designed to include a fountain which will be dedicated to her at the grand opening of the park on January 30th. Many local clubs and associations donated towards the purchase of this fountain, as she was an active member in many of them and they wished to give something back to honor her memory. This park land was purchased by the Town in 2004 with state grant funding that included conditions for its future development. Eleven years later, this obligation has been met and the Town's residents have another park for their enjoyment. A park that distinguishes itself as being a little different than our others with its lovely garden frontage leading to an upland trail,

then a boardwalk through the wetlands, and a kayak launch at the end. We hope that you will enjoy the addition of this park in our beautiful Town.

Another major construction project that the Town has been preparing for over the past few years is the water system improvement project. This project is underway exactly as anticipated and we expect it to be completed before the end of May 2016. This large scale construction project focuses on the areas of Town where older water pipes are in need of replacement and where some pipes are smaller than what is recommended for fire suppression. In addition to this, the Town is installing a gravity sewer line on west Inlet Harbor Road and making an intersection improvement there as well. A pocket park at this corner and a bike path along this road is also planned for installation by June 2016 by Inlet Harbor Development.

A minor project but one which made a noticeable improvement is the replacement of the Town entry sign on South Peninsula Drive. We also straightened out the bicycle path in this area for improved safety for both pedestrians and bicyclists. As I'm sure you also noticed around the Town, Florida Power and Light recently upgraded their light poles along Ponce Inlet's primary power grid. This was an FPL company decision for many locations around Florida, as the concrete poles are less susceptible to down power line issues, yet remain easy to repair when one does occur.

As the economy begins to recover, we've seen construction also increasing in residential areas as well. During 2015 there were more than 1,050 permits issued and more than 1,400 inspections conducted. Only 4 percent of those inspections failed that clearly shows the greatly improved efforts of our building inspectors to assist our residents and their contractors. In Ponce Inlet, there were almost 200 more permits issued in 2015 than in the prior year and we saw an increase in 2014 of almost 300 more permits than in the year prior to that. Our planning & development department processed almost 500 more permits in 2015 than they did in 2013 - that is a 100 percent increase! With this heavy increase in work load, we've restructured some of our internal operations to better serve you. We've also given the department's customer service area an upgrade to create a more efficient environment for our customers and our staff.

In 2015, we completed the third phase in reviewing and rewriting portions of the Town's Land Use and Development Code (LUDC). We also made some modifications to other areas of the Town's Code of Ordinances. Over the course of one year, the following changes were made to regulations in the Town:

- A provision for waivers for accessory structures on single-family residential properties has been created to allow homeowners an option under which to submit a request for a minor deviation from the LUDC;
- Parking and loading requirements were amended to clarify intent, create flexibility, and make them easier to understand.
- Modified height requirements for courtyard walls located within the building area to be built up to the lowest point of the adjacent roof;

- Modified requirements to allow two additional feet in fence height where significant elevation differences exist between two adjacent properties & provides for an increase above this height for columns, caps, arches, arbors, trellises and entry ways;
- Modified requirements to downsize the process for simple minor replats;
- Adopted tougher standards to restrict the proximity to a park where a sexual offender may establish a residence.

With the invaluable assistance of community volunteers, the Town was pleased to sponsor or co-sponsor a number of events during the year. In total, the Town participated in providing 16 Cultural / Historic events, 16 Community / Holiday events, and 7 athletic events during 2015. In addition to that, are all of the events held by the Marine Science Center, the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse Association and by your various Town clubs at the Community Center. We are an active community and there is always plenty to do here in Ponce Inlet!

In recognition of our focus on an active community lifestyle, the Town was awarded as a Healthy Weight Community Champion for the second year straight in 2015. Our interconnecting sidewalks, walking trails, athletic equipment in parks, and our landscape regulations that allow a percentage of the front yard for vegetable gardens are all positive factors taken into consideration for this award.

Most of our cultural / historic events have been sponsored by the Ponce Inlet Historical Museum located at 143 Beach Street. The museum has a number of talks planned in the coming months for your education and enjoyment. The museum is operated in total by a part-time equivalent staff member and 11 volunteers. We welcome any of you who may be interested in giving of your time in this manner. The museum welcomed a total of 2,110 visitors in 2015. Four modest construction projects were completed on the museum property this year: the instillation of storm shutters on the Meyer-Davis House, the addition of a shed for onsite storage, the walkway at the front entrance, and a fence to protect the historic cistern on the property. However the most significant accomplishment for the museum property is that both of the structures, the Meyer-Davis House and the Hasty Cottage, were listed on the National Register of Historic Places, joining our nationally famous Lighthouse in this historic recognition.

In reviewing 2015, we can see that our Town staff were not the only ones who have been hard at work for all of us. As our citizenry continue to volunteer at an amazing rate! We have volunteers related directly to town government purposes and volunteers who give of their time to other various community clubs. In total, there are at least 23 different boards, clubs, or other organizations for a population of just over 3,000. This is quite commendable! These many volunteers make our Town the special place we all enjoy. On behalf of Council and staff, I want to give our heartfelt thanks to all of our volunteers.

Lastly, in the election of 2015, the voice of our citizens was heard in a resounding stand of unification for the Town to stay the course in the final appeal process of the takings claim in Pacetta vs Ponce Inlet. We thank you for making the effort to study the issue and learn the

important facts that led to your decision. The filings with the 5th District Court of Appeals have been completed and we anticipate an oral argument will be scheduled sometime in 2016 with a ruling within the months to follow. This has been a long, difficult, and tiring road for all of us. I for one am very proud of the fortitude of our citizenry - staying involved, studying the issues, and refusing to bow down to scare tactics. YOU are what make Ponce Inlet great! YOU are the ones who will protect Ponce Inlet's unique and valuable assets for future generations to enjoy! I feel sure that in this I can speak for all of our Town Council as I say thank YOU!

With that, I wish you all a very happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year!

Respectively,

Gary L. Smith, Mayor