Dear Citizens of Surfside Beach:

Hope your Holidays were happy, and that these first few months of the New Year have also been special.

We are also on the way to a New Year...Budgetwise. April 1, 1997 is the start of a new Fiscal Year for the Town of Surfside Beach, and Council and I are happy to report that there will be no tax or rate increases. Staff has again done an excellent job, in preparing the 1997-98 Budget Document. Finance Director Sharon Cashion deserves extra "kudos" for the new format of the document which was done in-house, and makes for easier reading. Winner of the GFOA accounting award for five (5) consecutive years now, Sharon and her Staff continue to receive recognition for their excellent recordkeeping.

Parking meters for the Town's public parking areas will soon arrive and be installed for the upcoming Tourist Season. The enforcement period is from May 15th through September 15th. Council enacted this program to help provide funds to purchase more property for public parking, as well as meeting expenses for other tourist-related costs. Administrator is corresponding with several beachfront property owners in that regard.

The hourly rate will be $0.50.

However, Town residents may obtain a parking decal at no charge beginning April 15, 1997 at Town Hall. Simply bring proof of vehicle registration in the Town Limits to the Clerks at the Main Entrance, on or after Tuesday morning, April 15. For each properly registered vehicle, residents will receive a free parking decal to affix to the vehicle's rear window. Thanks for your cooperation.

SPRING CLEANING

Isn't Springtime wonderful in this part of the country? Flowers blooming, grass growing; a renewal of life abounds! Of course, the other side of the coin pertains to grass mowing, yard raking, weedeating and other laborious activities. As a reminder to residents, remember that yard wastes bagged by residents, are collected throughout Town on Wednesdays. It is not necessary to call for this residential service. Also, please remember that it is illegal to deposit yard waste into drainage ditches. This practice will clog the drains, and aggravate mosquito problems.

Of all the residential collection services, large limbs and mixed debris collection is likely the least understood. First, the customer needs to call Town Hall at 238-5531 by Wednesday of each week to describe what is to be collected, and to be put on a collection list for Thursday and Friday. The Town collects refrigerators, stoves and nearly everything imaginable. Unfortunately, the landfill will not accept these things all mixed together. Therefore, we must selectively collect wood by itself, metal by itself, etc. Undoubtedly, some of you have had a sanitation truck come by, collect only wood out of a pile of stuff, and leave lawn chairs, etc. behind, or vice-versa. Unfortunately, we have no choice but to take this approach, and make every attempt to come back by to collect remaining similar items. Consequently, it is imperative that these items are called in and described to Town Staff.

DUMPSTER ACCOUNTS
- Service Available Monday-Friday, Year Round
- Sunday "Summer" service available May 10 through Labor Day
- Cardboard "only" dumpsters are now available
- Blue Bag* Mixed Recyclables
  Thursday -- North Side of Town
  Friday -- South Side of Town

ROLL-CART ACCOUNTS
- Mondays: Garbage Only North Side of Town
- Tuesdays: Garbage Only South Side of Town
- Wednesdays: Bagged Yard Waste, Light Brush
- Thursdays: Blue Bag* Mixed Recyclables North Side of Town
- Fridays: Blue Bag* Mixed Recyclables South Side of Town
- Thursdays and Fridays: Mixed and Large Debris. Please Call 238-5531 by Wednesday for pickup

*Blue Bags for recyclables are available at no charge to residents. Please come by Town Hall Monday-Friday during business hours.
CANAM ACTIVITIES

Mayor Dick "Fireball" Johnson throws out the "First Pitch" in the March 13th "CanAm Days" Softball Game. Our local 50's Plus team and Visitors from the North enjoyed a fun game. On the previous night, "50 Plussers" hosted a Spaghetti Dinner for our vacationing Canadian friends.

POLICE BEAT

Over the years the Town has applied for several grants. Recently we received notification from the Governor’s Office that we have been awarded a $10,200 Grant, out of Federal Funds awarded to the State. The Grant monies have been designated for the purpose of increasing the tactical capabilities of our Police Department. In that regard, the following items will be purchased: Encrypted hand-held Radios; a 800 Mhz Radio for the main radio console/ High Intensity Flashlights, and a Pager for each officer.

The crime rate is down somewhat; however, Petty Larceny, Auto Theft and Breaking & Entering, especially of storage buildings, are still areas of concern. As the Season approaches, crime will start to escalate. Items left in vehicles are tempting to anyone walking by, so please don’t give criminals an opportunity to take something of value. Keep these things out of sight.

Up to this point in time home burglaries are down, and with a full compliment of sworn officers and CRIMEWATCH "roving patrols", we have had a rather quiet Winter.

Police Department Staff has finished a "Hurricane Preparedness" Class and is gearing up for any potential problems that the Hurricane Season may bring. The Town and the County will work closely to have a Pass System in place prior to the official "Hurricane Season". The passes will be color coded and will allow property owners access into Town once the "ALL CLEAR" is issued after a storm by the Governor and the Mayor.

A new, marked Police cruiser was purchased for the Department and joined the fleet on March 4, 1997. It replaces a 1970 Chevrolet, with 124,000 + miles. The "vintage" Chevy will be sold at the Town’s Annual Surplus Auction along with an assortment of bicycles, sometime in August.

REMEMBER to BUCKLE UP for Safety, and Drive Carefully!

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

The Finance Department is currently preparing for the Business License Season. Business License applications will be sent out by April 10th and must be renewed on or before June 1, 1997 in order to avoid late fees. All businesses doing business within the Town of Surfside Beach are required to have a license and to post that license in their place of business. If you operate a business out of your home, you are also required to have a business license. Please contact the Finance Department if you do not receive your Business License application.

Business License fees are calculated by multiplying the total revenue of a business as reported on their 1996 tax return by the rate schedule printed on the Business License application. Businesses that operate vending or amusement machines, video poker machines, or billiard tables must disclose in Section 17 of the Business License Application, the number of machines and/or tables the business operates.

The Town adopted its Annual Budget for the 1997-98 Fiscal Year on March 11, 1997. The General Fund budget provides for funding for one new full-time position, a Custodian, three new part-time seasonal positions, two Meter Attendants and one Sanitation Laborer, a network computer system, an upgrade of the fuel tank system, four vehicles, one tractor, and an Emergency Operations Center in the South wing of Town Hall. In the Accommodations Tax Fund, funding is provided for the Beach Renourishment Project expected to begin in late 1997, early 1998, and an Ocean Boulevard Sidewalk Project from 3rd Avenue North to 3rd Avenue South. The Hospitality Fee Fund provides funding for one part-time seasonal Recreation Aide, an Ocean Water Quality Monitoring Program, a Martin Park Beautification Project, and additional funding for the Beach Renourishment Project.

AROUND THE FIRE HOUSE

FIRES

If you have been reading the newspaper, watching TV or listening to the radio, you are most likely aware Fire Departments in Horry County have been busy lately. Normally, the Surfside Beach Fire Department may only respond to three or four major fires in a year, however, three large fires have occurred since January 1. Even though two of these fires were outside the Town limits, the Department arrived first on the scene. Unlike a few fires in the area, fortunately, there were no injuries or loss of life, however there have been some large dollar losses in this short time. The Department encourages everyone to check the battery in your smoke detectors, and have an escape plan ready for each member of your household.

OUTSIDE BURNING

Spring is in the air, and yard work ranks high on our lists. The Sanitation Department requires that leaves, limbs and other yard debris be bagged for pick-up on Wednesdays, however, if you intend to burn, be reminded of the following rules and regulations.

1. Before you burn, call the Fire Department at 238-2314 for a burning permit. Be advised, however, if we receive a complaint regarding the smoke from your fire, we will ask you to extinguish the fire.
2. Only a small pile may be burned at a time, and add to it.
3. An active water supply must be in place during burning.
4. An adult must be in attendance of the fire at all times.
5. The fire must be at least 50 feet from any structure or over-head limbs.
6. Absolutely no building/construction materials may be burned.

If you have any questions regarding outside burning, please contact the Fire Department. Don’t let a beautiful spring afternoon event turn into a bad event.
"GET READY"!

A preview of what to expect when the Town’s Beach Renourishment Project gets underway. The long-awaited project, scheduled to begin late Fall 1997 or Early Spring 1998, is expected to take approximately two (2) months to complete.

RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The “Kids” had another great season of basketball conducted at St. James Middle School. Sammy Truett coached his Tigers to a league championship in the boys ages 11-13. The Heat, coached by Jeff Ryals took home the honors in the boys, ages 13-15.

Baseball/Softball registration was held March 1, with another tremendous turnout of children ages 9-14. Baseball/Softball opening day is scheduled for Saturday, April 12th.

T-Ball Registration (Ages 6-7) - May 19th at 4:00 P.M.
8-Ball Baseball League (Age 8) - May 19th at 4:00 P.M.
Boys Baseball League (Ages 15-18) - May 19th at 4:00 P.M.

All at Huckabee Recreation Complex

The Civic Center has on-going classes and events for your enjoyment.

Aerobics: Every Monday-Friday 10:00 - 11:00 A.M.
Seniorcise: Tuesday and Thursday 9:00 - 10:00 A.M.
Oil Painting: Wednesday 10:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.
Karate Classes: Monday and Wednesday - 6:00 - 7:00 P.M.
Square Dancing: Wednesday 7:30 - 9:45 P.M.
Chess: Tuesday 7:00 P.M.
Bridge: Tuesday 1:00 P.M. and Thursday 7:00 P.M.

Special events during the month of March were the Can-Am Days Festival from March 8 to the 16th and of course, the Annual Easter Egg Hunt at the H. Blue Huckabee Recreation Complex held Easter Saturday ’97, March 29th.

Some upcoming events you may want to mark on your calendar will be the 50’s plus Annual Yard Sale, and Sun Fun Super Sunday in Surfside Beach in June.

“PLAY BALL”!

In the spirit of “teamwork”, Public Works employees lend a hand and equipment to the Recreation Department, in performing the filling and packing of ballfields at Huckabee Complex. One more example of how well Town Departments work together to get the job done!

HURRICANE CONFERENCE

Hurricane Season is just around the corner and the Fire Department is preparing its 9th Annual Public Hurricane Conference. Each year the Conference attendance grows, and this year will be no exception. Speakers from the Weather Channel, Clemson University, the State Emergency Preparedness Division, and other State, County and Town Departments will be here to answer your questions from preparing your property to evacuation and “re-entry”. The Conference has outgrown the Civic Center, and will be held at the new Seaside Elementary School just south of the Town limits, with doors opening at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 12. Also, for the third straight year, the Horry County Red Cross, in conjunction with the Fire Department will conduct “Hurricane Preparedness Can Be Fun” for children ages 5 to 15 during the adult Conference. This Children’s Seminar will also be conducted at Seaside Elementary School. Make plans now for your family to attend this event. If you have any questions please call Crew Chief Jan Lewis, Public Information Officer at 238-2590 or the Fire Department at 238-2314. The Grand Strand was missed by Hurricane’s Bertha and Fran in 1996, but don’t be fooled, we could be next. Don’t play “Russian Roulette” with these storms.

BUILDING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT

Thankfully this year’s busy Hurricane Season is finally over. Unfortunately the trend is for more active seasons ahead. The Winter months make a good time to evaluate your home or business for changes that could make the structure more hurricane resistant. The demand for hurricane shutters during this period should be slow and pricing may be more competitive than at the beginning of Hurricane Season.

Handouts are available in the Department for existing homes that show property owners what can be done to strengthen roofs by bracing trusses in the attic and anchoring trusses to exterior walls. If you don’t have wind rated garage doors, now is also a good time to beef them up or replace them. If shutters are not in your budget, get plywood now and precut for your windows. Plywood gets scarce during an impending storm. The Winter season is also a good time to get a contractor if you need any major alterations. They get extremely busy and hard to find in the Spring and Summer.

As always, use common sense in dealing with contractors. Make sure contractors are properly licensed and insured. Don’t give up-front money. Make sure permits have been issued before you allow someone to work on your property. Last and most important, never give final payment until you have proof the Town has inspected and approved the work. The Department wishes everyone a prosperous New Year.
“Hats Off” to Corporal Christopher DeMatteo, of the Surfside Beach Police Department. “Chris” was hired as a Uniform Patrol Officer in April 1993. In February 1995, he was promoted to PFC, and on August 12, 1996, he was elevated to the rank of Corporal.

Corporal DeMatteo serves as Sector Commander and is in charge of the Department’s Evidence Inventory. He serves as the Traffic Accident Investigator, as well as Training Officer. Chris is conscientious and meticulous in all his duties, keeping excellent records and reports.

Prior to relocating to this area, Chris retired from the New York Department of Defense, having served as a Federal Agent with the City of New York Police Department. He also served as a Police Officer with the Town of Aynor for five (5) years, as well as Chief of Police for two (2) years. Prior to that, he was a member of the Orangeburg, SC Sheriff’s Department.

Chris a loyal and dependable employee, is well thought of by his co-workers.

He and wife, Cathy, enjoy country living in the “wide open spaces” of Aynor, especially riding their horses. The DeMatteos have two (2) sons, Chris, Jr., and John.