CITY OF MYRTLE BEACH: A YEAR IN REVIEW

Significant Departmental Accomplishments
Fiscal Year 2017-18
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The Myrtle Beach City Council and the city’s 900-plus staff members are pleased to present this summary of departmental accomplishments during the 2017-18 Fiscal Year. Myrtle Beach takes the “first in service” pledge seriously. Our staff strives to provide excellent customer service to residents, businesses and visitors, year-round.

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Construction Services Department

- Performed 20,208 inspections, an increase of 2,072 from the previous year.
- Added two dedicated DRC Code Enforcement Officers, resulting in a vast improvement in the overall appearance of the downtown area, entertainment district and Ocean Boulevard.
- Issued 585 new single-family residential permits, an increase of 200 over the previous fiscal year.
- Issued $210,370,305 worth of residential permits (all types), an increase of $57,924,504 over the previous fiscal year.
- Issued $335,690,680 worth of residential and commercial permits (all types, combined), an increase of $87,027,356 over the previous fiscal year.

Convention Center

- Reduced energy consumption throughout the facility, saving $109,500 during the fiscal year. In addition, $108,800 worth of upfront costs were avoided, which translates to 16.3% in savings. Savings accomplished through:
  - Improved management of HVAC schedule.
  - Limited usage of escalators, unless building traffic dictates otherwise.
  - Fluorescent lighting replaced with LED lights.
  - Limited use of air conditioning or heating during move-in and move-out periods preceding and following exhibit hall events, when doors are open.
  - No lighting in unused spaces, when vacant.
- Updated the exterior and grounds of the Convention Center. The facelift featured an overhaul of landscaping and irrigation, including the Sheraton Hotel property, to ensure a cohesive, consistent appearance with improved visibility. Other changes and additions:
  - Installation of 55 solar-powered light bollards, 14 solar-powered street lamps and a solar-powered Wi-Fi and charging station.
  - Added concrete coatings to main entry.
  - Accented sidewalks with brick pavers and palms.
  - Sodded front lawn with Bermuda grass.
  - Resurfaced all main driveways on the property.
  - Added speed humps on driveways.
  - Added two pay-for-parking booths and accompanying landscaping at the new entrance to the Convention Center and Sports Center from Burroughs & Chapin Boulevard.
Repainted and improved the 25-year-old “Wyland Whaling Wall Mural.” Local artist Tommy Simpson restored the original painting and added brighter color and sea life. Expected completion is August 2018.

- Installed new telescoping seating platform in Exhibit Hall C. The system consists of 2,157 stadium-style seats and 10 handicapped locations (space where no seat exists). Installation was completed mid-January 2018 and provides clients and customers with customized seating options. The full system can be extended or retracted by six staff members in 45 minutes, making turnover easier and faster between events and shows.

- Introduced a new performance survey for customers at an event’s conclusion. The new survey provides a more comprehensive measurement of the convention center’s six teams: sales, event management, facility operations (cleaning and maintenance), convention services (event and facility security, as well as parking management) and concessions. Goals achieved:
  - Customer participation was at an all-time high, with 85% of customers completing the survey (new record).
  - The new survey showed 95.5% of customers rating their experience as “excellent” or “good.” (Previous surveys showed 90% of customers rating their experience as “excellent” or “good.”)
  - All survey results for Fiscal Year 2017-18 showed nearly 93% of customers were greatly satisfied with their experience, rating overall performance “excellent” or “good.”

- Increased overall center occupancy by 4.5%. Convention Centers typically measure success by occupancy, including set-up and move-out days. The industry considers 70% to be “maximum occupancy,” given holidays and quiet periods, at which point expansion may be considered.
  - Exhibit hall occupancy was 68.5%, an increase of 4.5% over the previous fiscal year.
  - Nearly 80 percent of events and shows choose to return annually.
Downtown Redevelopment Corporation (DRC)

- Successfully provided opportunities for public and private sectors to participate in a series of meetings to progressively plan for the downtown’s future. The development and creation of a database of ideas has been instrumental in beginning the process and crafting a vision for the DRC district.

- The DRC partnered with the city to better develop relationships with the local technology and innovative community. This led to the creation of the Technology Advisory Group (TAG), whose purpose is to recommend initiatives for the city in an effort to establish a Smart City reputation and help small businesses thrive.

- The successful partnership with the local merchants’ Downtown Task Force has created, and continues to achieve, a more aesthetically pleasing downtown environment for the public to enjoy. Additions included…
  - Added hanging flower baskets along Ocean Boulevard with various plants and flowers.
  - Installed uplifting sidewalk art with positive messages to Ocean Boulevard.
  - Evaluated, updated and enhanced lighting elements throughout district.
  - Brainstormed and effectively executed more family-friendly events.

- Renovated Plyler Park at 1000 North Ocean Boulevard, adding a permanent stage, new landscaping and the city’s first official piece of public art, The Goddess of the Sea.

- Worked to work to strengthen positive relationships and partnerships with the business community, city staff and officials, the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce and various other entities. The DRC achieved this by attracting and engaging community members through social media, events, meetings and educational opportunities.

- Increased redevelopment opportunities in the district through City Council’s approval of an additional financial incentive, the “Bailey Bill,” which allows for property taxes to be frozen at pre-tax levels on renovated buildings that are at least 50 years old.
Emergency Management

- Prior to the department’s creation, staff members were deployed to Texas in September 2017 to provide aid due to Hurricane Harvey.
- Created a full-time City Emergency Manager’s position in January 2018.
- Concentrated on rebooting and reorganizing the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
- An emphasis on planning includes the creation and implementation of an updated, efficient and effective City Emergency Operations Plan.
- Acquired South Carolina Incident Management Team (IMT).

Financial Management and Reporting Department

- Received the city’s 30th consecutive Certificate of Achievement Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, released June 30, 2017.
- Created the city’s first Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017. The PAFR is an abridged, simplified and easy-to-understand version of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. It conveys the highlights of the city’s financial activity, position and accomplishments, without the usual jargon and language found in accounting and finance.
- Received an “unqualified opinion” on the independent audit, conducted for fiscal year ending June 30, 2017. An “unqualified opinion” is an audit report that is issued when an auditor determines that each of the financial records provided by an entity (the city) is free of any misrepresentations. Further, an “unqualified opinion” states that financial records have been maintained in accordance with all Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) standards. This rating and report is the best an entity can receive.
- Created and presented a balanced budget for Fiscal Year 2018-2019.

Financial Services Department

- Added position provides better customer service. An accounting clerk position in Utility Billing serves as a cashier and back-up mailroom clerk. The extra position allowed for a third cashier window, shortening the customers’ wait time.
• For a second year, the Purchasing Division received a 100 percent score after being reviewed by the city’s independent auditor. To evaluate the division, the independent auditor performs a random check of inventory items to ensure the physical count matches the inventory system count. Purchasing maintains seven warehouse locations with more than 950 inventory line items.

• Mailed 10,713 business license renewal forms in Fiscal Year 2017-18, an increase of 608 renewals over the previous fiscal year.

**Fire Department**

• Implemented the Cancer Reduction Initiative to keep staff healthy and received a $200,000 federal grant to install exhaust capture systems. Statistics show firefighters are at a much higher risk of developing cancer due to exposure to known carcinogens in smoke and diesel exhaust. (The department has had three active employees diagnosed with cancer in the past five years.) The exhaust systems capture 100% of diesel exhaust and provide cleaner air for five stations. (Station No. 6 was ineligible as a newer station). Under the initiative:
  ✓ Safety officers collect used “flash hoods” after each use; hoods protect the face, ears and neck from heat. Hoods become saturated with cancer-causing agents that are absorbed into the body. Safety officers then distribute clean hoods and take used hoods to be properly cleaned.
  ✓ After fighting a fire, staff members, still breathing from air packs, rinse their gear with water and stand in front of an electric fan.
  ✓ After changing gear, firefighters wipe their hands, wrists, necks and faces with disinfectant wipes. The inexpensive wipes have proven in research to be highly effective.

• Updated the protocol for first responders for possible sepsis risk. Sepsis is a serious, life-threatening systemic infection. Medical Director Dr. Tom Martel, along with paramedics, developed a better sepsis protocol. When a patient meets specific criteria, the paramedic now draws blood for a culture and administers antibiotics in the ambulance. This level of service has received rave reviews. Since the protocol’s implementation, positive outcomes include…
  ✓ In transport, septic patients’ mortality rates have decreased significantly.
  ✓ Hospital stays have decreased considerably for transported septic patients.
  ✓ Dr. Martel is working to get all regional agencies to implement this sepsis protocol.

• Enhanced the Ocean Rescue Program with additional personnel and equipment.
  ✓ Aquatic Rescue Team includes 40 members, all highly trained to better serve beachgoers
  ✓ Four, two-person crews provides beach coverage from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
• Purchased four robotic lifesaving devices (EMILYs), in partnership with the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, and positioned those along the beach for speedy use.

• Accredited by the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA), becoming only the third East Coast fire department to receive accreditation.

• Transitioned the Florence County FEMA Type III Incident Management Team (IMT) to Myrtle Beach. In South Carolina, four regional FEMA Type III Incident Management Teams (IMT) exist; these teams are activated for regional and national emergency events that need oversight and management. This transition provided:
  ✓ The city received more than $100,000 in equipment and is now eligible for Homeland Security grant funding to support the team.
  ✓ Team members Gwyer, Maxwell and Arnel were deployed with the team to Texas due to the devastating effects of Hurricane Harvey.
  ✓ All team members receive FEMA training in order to secure credentials and team positions.

• Won the Richard S. Campbell Award for Excellence in Public Safety Education from the South Carolina Association of Fire Chiefs. This is the eighth consecutive year the Fire Department has won the award.

**Human Resources and Organizational Development Department**

• Redesigned the orientation process, adding an “Onboarding Program” to better prepare new hires for city employment. The program begins the day paperwork is submitted and continues through the first six months of employment. The improved effort, described as welcoming, fun and informative, includes:
  ✓ Streamlining completion of new hire paperwork prior to employee’s first day of work.
  ✓ Having new employees attend meet-and-greet with supervisor during orientation.
  ✓ Providing an introduction to “Financial Wellness” through “CitySAVE” learning session.
  ✓ Offering online courses to new hires in the first six months to teach regulation compliance and establish interest in career-long learning.
  ✓ Offering short videos and updated resources regarding various topics, including benefits and retirement.

• Set and achieved the goal of filling open positions within 45 days through NeoGov, an online electronic application tracking system. As a result, the average length of time to fill a position was 23 days.
• Increased the total number of applications by approximately 200%.
• Implemented an online, on-demand learning management system in September 2017. CityLEARN offers training to all employees on critical issues, including sexual harassment education and prevention, workplace violence prevention and computer security. The program also provides professional development courses to employees. Staff completed 3,332 courses, both mandatory and optional, from October 1, 2017, to June 30, 2018.
• Achieved an average year-to-date turnover rate of 5.79%, lower than the national average of 9.1% for municipalities, according to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).
• Updated four policies related to the work environment and benefits:
  ✓ Updated Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) policy to clarify that both mothers and fathers are able to take leave to bond with newborn child.
  ✓ Updated Nepotism Policy to include domestic partners and to allow family members to work within the same department, as long as one is not supervising the other.
  ✓ Updated Education Reimbursement Policy to prioritize funding for Associate and Bachelor degrees; also prioritized funding for Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) students.
  ✓ Created a Community Engagement Events Policy to better protect employees who may become injured while volunteering for events designed to connect city employees with community members.

Insurance and Risk Services Department

• Acquired responsibilities and tasks associated with the city’s Health Insurance Benefits, effective July 1, 2017; the department now manages the entire health insurance program. The CareHere Wellness Clinic and wellness program also are fully maintained by Insurance and Risk Services. Two staff members were added to handle the new responsibilities: one position transfer from Human Resources and one new administrative assistant position.
• Hired a new third-party administrator for workers’ compensation and liability claims, significantly reducing costs. The agreement also provides department with access to state-of-the-art claims reporting system.
• Opened the CareHere Occupational Medical Clinic to employees in October 2017. The clinic saves employees’ time by providing faster medical attention. This clinic coordinates and offers pre-employment physicals, annual work-related physicals, return-to-work physicals, work-injury visits, fit-for-duty exams, drug and breath-alcohol testing, hearing testing and more.
• Added an Ambulatory Benefit to employees’ health insurance coverage, effective January 1, 2018. This benefit covers 100% of seven procedures, with a zero out-of-pocket cost to the employee after a $50 co-pay.
• Added a portable x-ray machine to the Occupational Medical Clinic on March 15, 2018, to cut time and cost of sending employees to outside facilities for x-rays.
• Taught 2,487 hours of safety training in 29 classes to staff members from various departments.
• Worked with Emergency Management to ensure compliance with NOAA’s TsunamiReady and StormReady re-certifications.
• Worked with financial departments to assess cyber risk and exposure in city’s systems and operations.

**Municipal Court**

• Processed 28,222 court cases during the 2017 calendar year.
• Created a full-time Public Defender, per SC Supreme Court requirements, for persons who are indigent and cannot afford representation.
• Worked to establish a Homeless Court for those who choose to avail themselves of that option when facing charges. The Homeless Court will exist in 2018.

**Neighborhood Services Department**

• Hosted the third annual *MyBeach 101*, the Citizens Academy, with 26 participants graduating.
• Updated the Youth Education and Training (YET) program to include career education and training to better serve program participants.
• Hosted the Annual Black History Month Celebration at Mary C. Canty Recreation Center in February, with awards to “unsung heroes” in the community.
• Hosted the inaugural “Jazz in the Park” at Chapin Park, to celebrate local musicians and the city’s rich musical heritage.
• Partnered with residents to host a Juneteenth Celebration, a holiday that commemorates the end of slavery.
• Jointly sponsored the Grand Strand Cultural Arts After-School Program for youth at the Historic Myrtle Beach Colored School Museum and Education Center.
• Regularly attended Neighborhood Watch meetings throughout the city to improve communication and promote events that establish city pride and identity.
**Planning Department**

- Completed the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, which is awaiting City Council approval.
- Updated and maintained the Zoning Code, processing amendments more quickly than Municode.
- Applied for and secured $464,600 in various types of grants:
  - $100,000 from the South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism’s Recreation Trails Grant for the renovation of a former Air Force building, trailhead, outdoor classroom, driveway and parking lot (area known as Thunderbolt Park).
  - $25,000 from the Myrtle Beach Air Base Redevelopment Authority as matching funds for the SCPRT Recreation Trails Grant.
  - $200,000 from the Myrtle Beach Air Base Redevelopment Authority to complete renovation of a former Air Force Building, including a new roof, HVAC, flooring, drywall, electrical work, plumbing work and landscaping (area known as Thunderbolt Park).
  - $25,000 from The Vinings, LLC, to construct a curb cut at Farrow Parkway, allowing for a driveway leading to the former Air Force Base building in Thunderbolt Park.
  - $6,500 from the CSX “Beyond the Rails” program to purchase trees, fertilizer, mulch and more for a tree planting in Thunderbolt Park.
  - $7,500 from TD Bank’s TD Tree Days Program will provide for 75 trees and supplies for a tree planting event, to be held in Withers Swash Park on October 31, 2018.
  - $20,000 from TD Bank for improvements to Myrtle’s Market, including irrigation, sod, sidewalks, trees, shrubs, planting boxes, flowers, vegetable plants, soil and signage. Some work has been accomplished, with the rest to be completed in November 2018.
  - $600 from The Lifesaver’s Conference, Inc., to cover registration and travel expenses for a department representative to attend the conference.
  - $2,500 from the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff, Energy Office to help illustrate gasoline savings by cycling, using the BikeMB app, and 10 bicycle racks with the BikeMB logo.
  - $50,000 from the Myrtle Beach Air Base Redevelopment Authority to construct the southern East Coast Greenway trailhead, including signage, a pavilion and concrete pad, water bottle refilling station, bike repair stand, picnic tables and a beginner mountain bike trail.
  - $16,000 technical assistance grant from South Carolina Emergency Management for an annual business disaster recovery symposium. The event covers weather, emergency management, preparing for a disaster, active shooter information and more.
$1,500 from Eagle Scout (then-candidate) Nicholas Golden to create way-finding signage and kiosks which he installed along Meyers, Maverick, Farrow, Avenger and Woodland bicycle and pedestrian paths in The Market Common district.

A railroad caboose valued at $10,000 from CSX Railroad, for use at the Historic Myrtle Beach Train Depot, 851 Broadway Street.

- Requested, with Horry County, that Census tracts 506 and 507 be designated as “Opportunity Zones” by the governor’s office. The tracts then received that designation in April 2018 from the US Department of the Treasury. The designation encourages long-term, private investments in low-income areas by providing federal tax incentives to those taxpayers who re-invest unrealized capital gains into Opportunity Funds.
- Updated the Arts Sub-Element of the Cultural Resources Element, with the Cultural Arts Committee, which Council approved in 2018.

- Updated the Tourism Element of the Comprehensive Plan, with the Tourism Committee.
- Coordinated the Annual Business Disaster Recovery Symposium, with the Tourism Committee.
- Received Honorable Mention as a Bicycle Friendly community.
- Co-hosted J-1 International Student Orientation Programs with the Myrtle Beach Police Department and other local groups, to include bicycle and pedestrian safety presentations from committee members at each program, May through July. Provided white and red blinking lights for bicyclists and walkers.
- Redesigned the English bicycle safety brochure and translated it into additional three languages: Mandarin, Russian and Spanish.
- Worked with the Socastee High School JROTC to clean the Myrtle Beach Air Force Base history signs in May 2018.
- Helped coordinate and install Ed Fanjoy’s donated collection of model airplanes in the Thunderbolt Park recreation building.

**Police Department**

- City Council approved the Seven Year Staffing and Deployment Plan, the Police Recruitment and Retention Plan and the Downtown Code Enforcement and Property Maintenance Initiative.
- Answered 215,585 calls in the Communications Center, including 128,665 police-related calls for service, 20,737 emergency calls (911) and 14,948 medicals calls for service.
• Investigated 3,087 cases.
• Worked 47 special events.
• Thanks to continued public safety efforts, saw a decrease in aggravated assaults, arsons, burglaries, motor vehicle thefts and homicides, compared to the previous calendar year.
• Watched more than 800 closed circuit cameras throughout the city for investigations and proactive responses.
• Processed 20,207,903 license tags through the license plate reader cameras, resulting in 60,295 alerts for vehicles with violations.
• Implemented Hyper-Reach, a new program that communicates directly with residents and business owners, including weather emergency notifications.
• Expanded the K-9 Unit to include tracking suspects, apprehending suspects and detecting narcotics with the adoption of Cees, a Belgian Malinois.
• Purchased and equipped a Mobile Command Post for special events and critical incidents.
• Requested additional LED lighting from Santee Cooper, which increased visibility as part of the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) efforts.
• Filled every sworn position in the Police Department for the first time in two decades. In addition to improving recruitment and retention, the department prioritizes continuing education and partnerships to better protect the community.

**Public Information Department**

• Launched a new City of Myrtle Beach website ([www.cityofmyrtlebeach.com](http://www.cityofmyrtlebeach.com)) with a clean, modern aesthetic in January 2018. The easy-to-use website offers a helpful “I Want To...” tab, calendars, an Events list, news items and additional features. The website works well on mobile devices in an app-like format.
• Posted City Council agendas and all supporting documents for Council meetings on the website, beginning in February 2018.
• Produced four quarterly *Progress Report* newsletters for distribution to 20,000 utility customers. The newsletter also is available on the website and in paper form at City Hall. Beginning in 2018, *Progress Report* was printed in full-color.
• Processed and responded to 242 requests under the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act for access to public documents during the fiscal year.
• Increased the city government’s presence on social media pages, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, improving two-way communication with residents, locals and visitors alike. The Public Information staff published more than 1,700 posts to the Myrtle Beach City Government Facebook page (www.facebook.com/myrtlebeachcitygovernment) during the year.
• Achieved 17,000-plus “likes” on the city’s official government Facebook page.
• Created the Myrtle Beach Point of View Blog as an additional method to communicate with the public about the city’s activities, providing facts and detailed information. See https://myrtlebeachpointofview.wordpress.com.
• Organized and coordinated the annual Military Appreciation Days in May 2018. The month-long celebration featured military-themed activities, including the Horry County JROTC Drill Meet, Veterans Center Picnic, Military Appreciation Days Parade (and Grand Marshal), a Family Picnic and more. Myrtle Beach Military Appreciation Days sponsors include: PGBA, Inc., the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce and the Military Appreciation Committee (ad hoc).
• Organized and coordinated the annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day Ceremonies at the Myrtle Beach Convention Center.

Public Works Department

• Completed 24 public works-related infrastructure projects with an estimated value of $3.3 million dollars. The projects involved equipment replacement and rehabilitation, new construction work and ongoing maintenance for parks, solid waste facilities, beach walkovers, road and streetscape improvements and water and sewer distribution systems.
• Replaced old traffic cabinets with more modern controllers that allow signal preemption programming from a computer.
• Purchased new TV-inspection camera truck that inspects sanitary and sewer collection system pipelines, service lines and stormwater pipelines.
• Completed grant applications for solid waste, stormwater management, beach renourishment and parks projects.
• Redistributed the weekly Solid Waste collection routes for better balance and operational efficiency.
• Implemented routine smoke testing to check for inflow into the city’s sanitary sewer system.
Recreation Services Department

- Renovated and improved the following facilities during the fiscal year: Doug Shaw Memorial Stadium, Mary C. Canty Recreation Center, Matt Hughes Skate Park, Thunderbolt Park, Myrtle’s Market and railroad cars at the Train Depot.
- Served more than 102,500 annual visitors to Crabtree Memorial Gymnasium, a new record.
- Hosted more than 11,000 games on various athletic fields, including Doug Shaw Memorial Stadium, Grand Park Athletic Complex and the Ned Donkle Complex.
- Hosted 518 facility rentals at General Robert H. Reed Recreation Center.
- Welcomed 116,000 annual visits to Chapin Memorial Library, with nearly 14,000 individuals participating in library programs during the year. The library hosted 585 programs, both at the library and at a few off-site locations.
- Continued emphasis on youth outreach, with highly effective teen programs for local youth. The program has 42 members, four of whom enrolled in college. Another 20 achieved part-time employment, while 15 students received all A’s and B’s during the school year. The young people engaged in 14 service projects and 27 youth development activities during the year.

Sports Tourism Department

- Created a Concessions Division, with three full-time employees and 30-plus part-time employees. The effort led to a significant decrease in complaints related to quality of service. After-tax sales for the Concessions Division for Fiscal Year 2017-18 exceeded $540,000.
- Transitioned to city ownership and management of the Myrtle Beach Spring Break Track and Field Meets: Alan Connie Shamrock Invitational, Beach Run Invitational and Coastal Carolina Invitational. A new website provides registration materials and e-commerce (www.myrtlebeachspringtraining.org).
- Hosted more than 3,000 athletes, coaches and officials during the track meets, generating $1.45 million in estimated direct spending.
- Enhanced live streaming service of sporting events with technology partner BleuFrame Technology. The Grand Park Athletic Complex was chosen as one of a select group of venues to test state-of-the-art streaming technology. Broadcast views totaled 84,156 for the fiscal year.
- Installed new cameras on fields one through nine at the Grand Park Athletic Complex, at no cost to the city.
- The venue usage fee was increased for events taking place during a select period (July through December). Revenues collected for facility usage increased approximately $40,000.
- Strengthened relationships with partners, including The Ripken Experience, the Sports Center and Vacation Myrtle Beach.