



TOWN OF BLUFFTON

H E A R T O F T H E
L O W C O U N T R Y

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TOWN OF BLUFFTON

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A MESSAGE FROM MAYOR SULKA



On behalf of Town Council, thank you for your investment and partnership with the Town of Bluffton. Your interest and participation in our community, whether it is of a personal or business nature, contributes to shaping the Town's policies, projects, programs and processes. We are grateful to work for and with a deeply-invested community.

As our Town continues to grow, we remain mindful to preserve our heritage as we build our future. The Town's latest population estimate is approximately 19,000 residents – a 34% increase since the 2010 census. No other municipality in our region has experienced such rapid growth. Through careful planning and the work of our talented staff we are able to maintain the essence of Bluffton while promoting responsible growth.

As I reflect on the year, I am proud of the capital improvement projects which contribute to the overall quality of the Bluffton experience such as the Oyster Factory Park enhancements, sewer project extensions, sidewalk/lighting installations and many others. I am proud of the offerings of the Don Ryan Center for Innovation to cultivate entrepreneurship at diverse age and skill levels. We are blessed to have a police department that is engaged, involved and integrated into our community so we are able to work together with residents to provide a safe community. Perhaps most satisfying, is that the town was able to accomplish all of this while reducing property taxes.

Lastly, I have to tell you how proud I am of the spirit of our Bluffton community. At a time when many communities find reasons to be divisive, Blufftonians come together to help each other time and time again. Hurricane Matthew offered countless examples of our generous and cooperative spirit, however, it emerges every time our community is faced with adversity or an opportunity to help one another.

Thank you for all you do as we continue to plan and implement Bluffton's future. I am pleased to present Bluffton's Annual Report detailing this year's achievements.

#BlufftonStrong

Mayor Lisa Sulka

BLUFFTON TOWN COUNCIL



Sitting (L to R): Lisa Sulka, Mayor; Fred Hamilton, Council member; Dan Wood, Council member
Standing (L to R); Larry Toomer, Mayor Pro Tempore; Harry Lutz, Council member

A MESSAGE FROM TOWN MANAGER, MARC ORLANDO



It is my pleasure to present the Town of Bluffton's 2016 Annual Report, highlighting another extraordinary year for the Town. This year Town Council engaged in a strategic planning process involving Town citizens; Council-appointed boards, commissions and committees; and Town Staff. The result was a Strategic Plan which includes a more succinct Vision and Mission for the Town, as well as identification of six distinct Strategic Focus Areas which continue to guide policy decisions and fiscal priorities. As Bluffton's Town Manager, it is my responsibility and privilege to implement Town Council's Strategic Plan Action Agenda and to ensure that staff continues to provide excellent service while acting in a financially responsible manner.

This year Town Council adopted a \$36 million consolidated budget to meet emerging, programmatic, public amenity and infrastructure needs. Our Capital Improvement Project Program includes replacement of aging septic systems with public sewer, investment in Historic Preservation and Heritage Tourism initiatives, public infrastructure installation at Buckwalter Place Commerce Park, and streetscape and park improvements in the Historic District. Thanks to support from strategic partners, successful application of Federal and State grants, our use of accommodations/hospitality tax funds, as well as stormwater utility fee funds, this ambitious program has minimal impact on property taxes.

With sound fiscal management, the Town has established a sustainable, results-oriented budget with growing reserves. As a result, the Town's AA+ General Obligation Bond Rating was reaffirmed by Standard and Poor for the third year in a row allowing continued investment in Town-wide public projects with lower interest rates for taxpayers on Town indebtedness.

The Town continues to be highly committed to implementing innovative programs which provide a direct benefit to the community. Through the Bluffton Police Department's Community Policing practices, providing a safe and healthy community remains a top service priority.

Further, the Town continues to invest in the sustainability of the Don Ryan Center for Innovation and the Bluffton Public Development Corporation. In a little more than three years, the Don Ryan Center for Innovation has incubated 24 companies and assisted with the creation of 77 company employees in the regional workforce with more than a \$4 million in annual payroll.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Town of Bluffton Town Council, Town Staff, and the community for their leadership and support. One of the greatest rewards of working for the Town of Bluffton is to be a part of this deep community pride. If I can be of service to you, please contact me at morlando@townofbluffton.com.

Sincerely,

Marc Orlando



Mission Statement

WE TAKE CARE OF OUR CITIZENS, THE TOWN AND EACH OTHER BY CONTINUOUSLY MAKING OUR COMMUNITY AND ORGANIZATION BETTER.

Vision Statement

BLUFFTON, THE HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY, A TOWN THAT APPRECIATES THE PAST, FOCUSES ON TODAY AND IS PLANNING TOGETHER FOR A GREATER FUTURE.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

- MAY RIVER AND SURROUNDING RIVERS AND WATERSHEDS
- TOWN ORGANIZATION
- ECONOMIC GROWTH
- FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY
- COMMUNITY QUALITY OF LIFE
- INFRASTRUCTURE



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BLUFFTON PUBLIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Mission

- Foster a positive business climate and stimulate economic successes;
- Attract new businesses to Bluffton and facilitate economic development opportunities;
- Link public projects to private investments;
- Provide leadership at Buckwalter Place Multi-County Commerce Park; and
- Establish partnerships and relationships with the business community, South Carolina Department of Commerce, Beaufort County and others.

Officers

Berl Davis, Chairman, Chief Executive Officer, Palmetto Electric

Sarah Reed, Vice Chairman, Financial Advisor, Edward Jones'

Greg Johnson, Secretary, Assistant Vice President and Branch Sales Manager, Regions Bank

Directors

Mac Dunaway, Managing Partner, Dunaway and Cross

Richard Gough, President, Technical College of the Lowcountry

Lynn King, Community Relations Manager, TidePointe/Broad Creek Care Center

Brian Rose, Jr., President and Principal, Beacon Insurance

Meredith Truitt, Director of Total Rewards and Human Resources Information Systems, eviCore Healthcare

Ex-Officio

Evva Anderson, Beaufort County School District Board of Education

Harry Lutz, Town of Bluffton Town Council

Larry Toomer, Town of Bluffton Town Council

Marc Orlando, ICMA-CM, Town of Bluffton, Town Manager

Shirley Freeman, Treasurer, Town of Bluffton



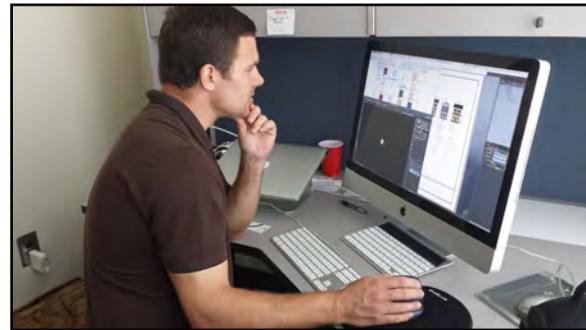
DON RYAN CENTER FOR INNOVATION

In a world of innovation, one thing is certain: The better the idea, the faster you need to get it to market.

The DRCI is a key component of the Town's economic development strategy, which is to grow a regional economic center with a diverse economy.

The **Don Ryan Center for Innovation** offers hands-on consulting, office space, and links participants to intellectual property, technology evaluation, product development services, seed financing, mentorships, and support resources. Operations are funded by Town of Bluffton and private support.

The DRCI is the region's only incubator program providing the resources entrepreneurs need to assist them in their quest for success.



HIGHLIGHTS

- **DRCI Companies employ 88 people** and have an annual **payroll of \$5.1 million dollars.**
- Graduated three additional innovators.
- Second year of entrepreneurship program with SCAD and Beaufort County Schools.
- Membership program for individuals and corporations.
- Public education sessions.
- Held second annual golf fundraiser.
- Started Girls Who Code Club. A free coding initiative for girls grades 6-12.



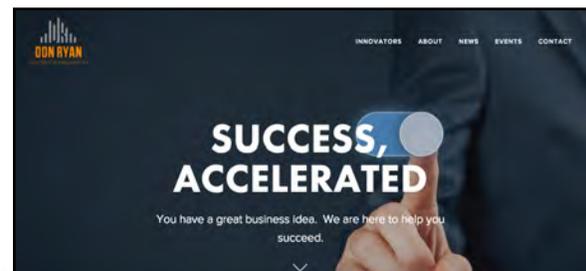
28 Companies have been in the formal program



70% located in Bluffton



We have informally advised another 67 companies (since 8-2013)



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

The Human Resources Department provides leadership, direction and support needed to attract, retain and develop talented individuals to align ourselves with the ever-changing needs of the Town of Bluffton. We help Town Departments maintain a dedicated workforce capable of delivering exceptional services that make Bluffton a special place to live, work and play. We are dedicated to the citizens of Bluffton by providing the best employees for jobs within the Town.

Employees Give Back

- Volunteering time to support community events such as the May River Clean Up;
- Donated to the local blood bank at several blood drives at Town Hall;
- Encouraged Town employees to participate and support several walks and events in the area to raise funds and awareness for the American Heart Association, the Alzheimer Association, Breast Cancer Awareness and the Bluffton Rotary's Walk for Water.



We Recognize and Support Our Employees

- Provided each employee with a tree sapling for Annual Employee Appreciation Day to recognize them as well as support our Tree is the Key Policy;
- STAR Awards for on-the-spot recognition;
- NOVA Award to honor and recognize the top employees and the Employee of the Year;
- Birthday & Anniversary celebrations held monthly to recognize employees celebrating a birthday and/or anniversary that month;
- Honor employees as they retire from public service employment at the Town of Bluffton;
- Communicate and update at quarterly all employee meetings;
- Quarterly lunch with the Town Manager for new employees to learn about the Mission and the values at the Town of Bluffton.

Staff Highlights

- May River Charter Tours – Eco Tours of the May River for new staff done twice a year;
- Offering a Womens' Self-Defense Program to female staff that are interested, it is a national certification course that we will try to offer annually;
- Offering CPR/AED Certification training at Town Hall lead by a Bluffton Township Fire Department staff member;
- Bowling tournament held to get employees together for a little friendly competition.



Staff Highlights

- The Town recognizes the value of a healthy workforce by supporting and providing employees with healthy and wellness-related programs such as the Farm-to-Table Bag program with the Bluffton Farmers' Market. This supports the local Farmers' Market and gives staff an array of locally grown food items to cook for their family.
- Each spring the Human Resources Department organizes biometric screenings for employees and their family members on the State Health Plan. This provides employees with an on-site screening that transfers into in-depth information about their personal health.
- Believing that "healthy is the new wealthy", the Human Resources Department organized and scheduled several seminars and lunch-n-learns to educate employees about their financial health. With the use of some local financial institutions, employees were able to meet one-on-one with professionals to learn about Identity Theft, Managing your Money, and the Importance of Savings for the Future.
- We encourage exercise and weight loss with stepping challenges and awards for employees losing the highest percentage of weight over a specified period of time. We also encourage employees to utilize local gyms/fitness centers by offering discounted memberships.
- The State Retirement System was invited to speak with employees about the retirement plan in place. The regional representative from the Deferred Compensation Program came on-site to facilitate presentations to educate employees about the optional 401K and 456 plans.
- A NOVA is a star that shines thousands of times brighter. The criteria is that the employee will have done something which exemplified and brilliantly reflected the Town's Core Beliefs and Mission. The NOVA Award Winner is someone who made a notable contribution to the Town and someone whose work performance is consistently exceptional.



BLUFFTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

FBINAA President Joey Reynolds – Bluffton Police Chief Joey Reynolds was sworn as president of the FBI National Academy Associates, Inc. (FBINAA) at the organization’s annual conference in St. Louis, Missouri in July. The FBINAA is a non-profit, international organization made up of nearly 16,000 senior law enforcement men and women who have graduated from the prestigious FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia. It allows law enforcement leaders to network around the world, improving their skills and their departments’ skills. While the FBINAA provides training opportunities for those in law enforcement, it also provides members to share ideas, techniques, and experiences.

40 Under 40 Award Given to Lt. Joe Babkiewicz. - Bluffton Police Lt. Babkiewicz has been announced as a 2016 “International Association of Chiefs of Police 40 under 40 Award” recipient.

This award is designed to recognize 40 law enforcement professionals under the age of 40 from around the world who demonstrates leadership and exemplifies commitment to their profession. Award winners represent the law enforcement Leaders of Today as well as the Leaders of Tomorrow.



Officer of the Year Carissa Garnes - The Bluffton Police Department would like to introduce Officer Carissa Garnes to you as this year’s Officer of the Year. She was awarded the honor at the department’s annual swearing-in and awards ceremony in May. Officer Garnes regularly goes above and beyond the call of duty and has donated her own time to help with various programs like the planning and execution of National Night Out, the department’s annual Christmas Toy Drive and researching and writing a grant that awarded the department \$205,000 for a two-officer traffic team.

Traffic Team Grant - The Bluffton Police Department has a new traffic team. The two-officer team is made possible due to a \$205,000 grant BPD was awarded by the SC Department of Public Safety. It allows the officers to devote their entire 12-hour shift to finding and ticketing traffic violators. From speeding, to aggressive driving, driving while under the influence, or any other traffic violation, this team is out to protect the motorists who are driving correctly. The grant has been awarded for a nine-month time period, but it is renewable for up to three years. The department has already submitted the application to have it renewed for 2017. This team also makes it possible for the department to offer free child car seat safety checks every last Thursday of the month from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.



Citizen's Police Academy 2nd Class – In 2015 thirty-three students graduated from the Bluffton Police Department's Citizen's Police Academy. This is the second year the Department has offered the 10-week course to the public for free. It focuses on the history of police, traffic enforcement, radar operation, evidence collection, fingerprint recovery, defensive tactics, firearms and more.



BPD App - The Bluffton Police Department now has the ability to improve communication and engage the public through its new cell phone app. From news alerts, to requesting a police report, to providing a tip, residents and tourists will be able to have access to department information at their fingertips. The app can be downloaded by searching MYPD or My Police Department in iTunes, the Android Market, or Amazon App Store. Once you've downloaded MYPD, choose South Carolina, and then select the Bluffton Police Department.



DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The Department of Finance and Administration is comprised of three divisions, Finance, Municipal Court, Information Technology and Business License.

Finance

The Town received an unqualified audit opinion for the FY 2015 Financial Statement reports. The “clean opinion” is the most confident response provided by independent audit firms to users that the financial statements present a fair representation of the entity’s financial position and are free of material misstatements. The town is in sound financial condition with the growth in the tax base in recent years, supported by written financial policies council adopted, and its professional management.

The Town initially issued \$14 million Tax Increment Financing Bonds to support the redevelopment of the Town’s Infrastructure and municipal facilities in 2005 and 2006. These funds were used for various Capital Improvement Projects occurring over the course of the next few years.

More accomplishments include:

- AA+ Municipal Bond Rating issued by Standard & Poor's - 2014
- 2015 Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada.
- Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Award for the 2015 Comprehensive Annual Financial Reporting Award for the 2015 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) from the government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management. The Town has received the CAFR award for the last 8 years
- 2015 Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting (PAFR) from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. The Town has received a prestigious national award for the last 5 consecutive years.

Municipal Court

The Town’s Municipal Court reviews all records for accuracy because there are so many requests for dispositions for FOIA, FBI, and Employment so it is very important that our information is accurate. In addition, Municipal Court changed policies to accommodate customers (defendants/victims/witnesses) whenever a request for a reschedule is made, they can immediately be given a new date and time so we know they have been notified and are not relying on the postal service to deliver in time for the court date and also save the Town on postage. When our citizen’s serve on jury panels, we pay them immediately so we do not have to mail out up to 150 checks; we have cut down on postage and also return mail. The police department has started using E-Tickets and this has helped to cut down on data entry error.



Information Technology (IT) and Geographical Information Systems (GIS)

We are pleased to announce the launch of our newly designed website. Our web addresses are the same, www.townofbluffton.sc.gov and www.blufftonpolice.sc.gov, but our look is completely new. With the help of Hazel Digital Media, a local Bluffton vendor, we have totally redesigned the feel and function of the site.

From the homepage you can easily access information about upcoming meetings, community events, media releases, financial reports, departments, etc. If you are looking for quick information check out the "I Want To" tab in the top navigation for frequently asked questions such as: Find Parking in Old Town Bluffton; Rent a Town Facility; Voting Information; Find Out if I Live in the Town of Bluffton; Contact a Staff Member; Sign Up for Trash Service.

Business License

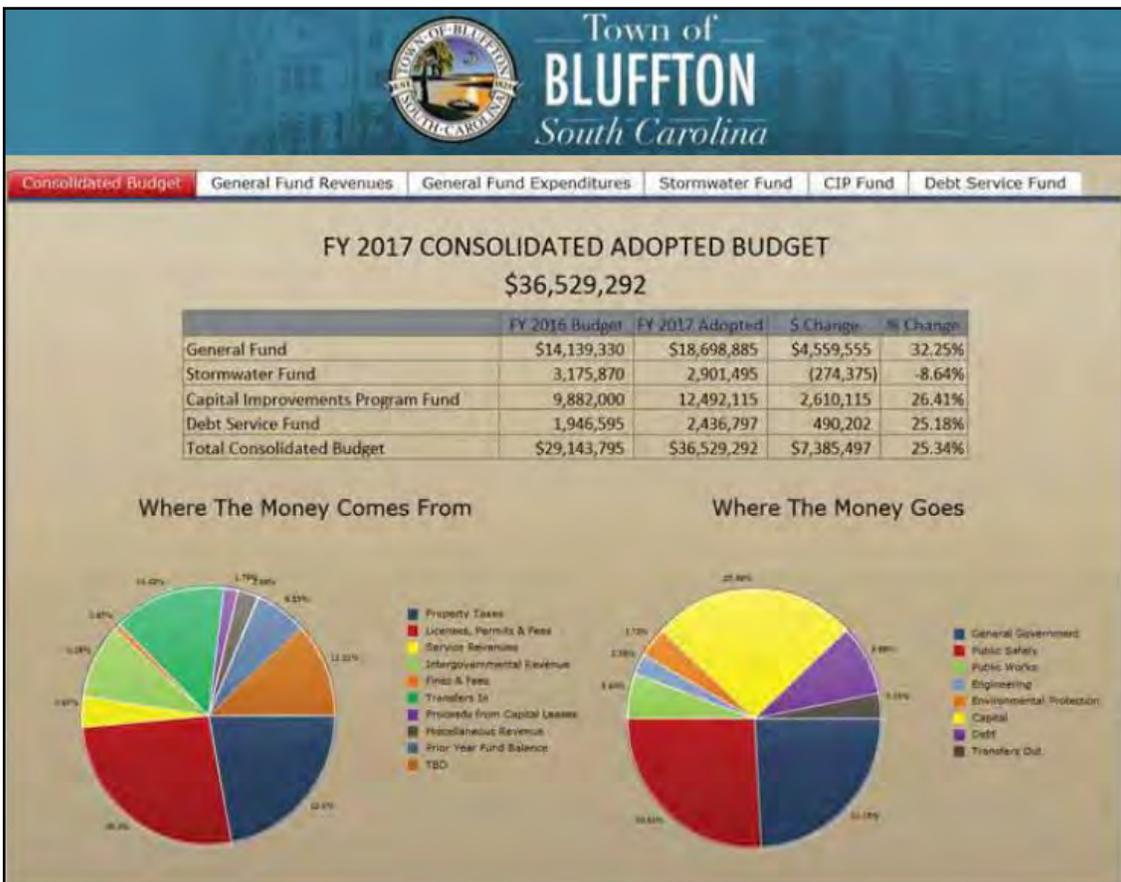
More and more businesses are choosing to do business in Bluffton, South Carolina. There are 1,139 businesses located within the town, and a total number 2,465 total business licenses issued. The Town accepts the state-wide uniform business license application form instituted by the Municipal Association of South Carolina.

The building market continues to grow in Bluffton. Contractors encompass 8% of the in town business licenses issued in 2016 to date. Other predominate industries within the Town include Personal Services, approximately 210 in town or roughly 19% (i.e. Beauty and nail salons, massage and other spa services, pet services, event planners and suppliers, photographers); Professional Services, 150 or 13%; Medical, 135 or 12%; Retail, 130 or 12%; Restaurants, 65 or 6% and Real Estate, 50 or 5%.



Town of BLUFFTON

South Carolina

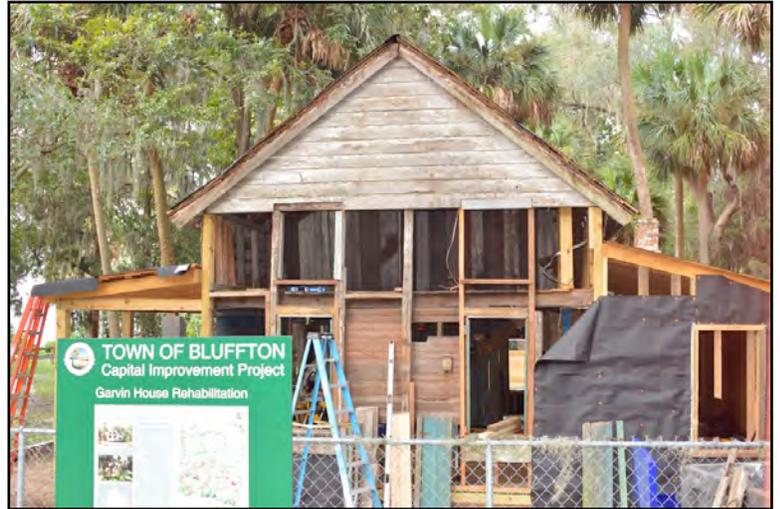


DEPARTMENT OF GROWTH MANAGEMENT

The Growth Management Department is comprised of three divisions, Planning & Community Development, Building Safety, and the Customer Service Center.

Through these divisions, the Growth Management Department provides the following services:

- Administers the development, zoning, historic preservation, community development and neighborhood assistance programs, and programs and regulations of Bluffton to ensure the sound management of Bluffton's growth while protecting the quality of life and economic vitality;
- Enforces the adopted building codes and technical standards to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the community; and
- Provides excellent professional, friendly, and efficient customer service to meet the needs and expectations of the Bluffton community.



18% Increase in New Housing Starts
 775 New Housing Permits Issued in FY 2016
 657 New Housing Permits Issued in FY 2015
 Valuation of New Homes \$293 Million

11% Increase in New Commercial & Residential Construction Value

\$327 Million in FY 2016
 \$293 Million in FY 2015

5% Decrease in Issued Building Permits

1,685 in FY 2016
 1,779 in FY 2015

8% Decrease in Development Plan Approvals

56 in FY 2016
 61 in FY 2015

Planning & Community Development

- Received two grants for the Garvin House rehabilitation from the State of South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism Undiscovered SC grant and one from the State of South Carolina Department of Archives and History Federal Historic Preservation Grant for the stabilization totaling \$230,000;
- Held the Town's first ever Historic Preservation Symposium to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Bluffton Historic District;
- In February of 2016, Bluffton was recognized as the 6th State of South Carolina Cultural District;
- The Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) distributed a total of \$62,000 to 11 families with a household income of less than 60% of the Median Household Income for home repairs; and
- In addition to home repairs, the Neighborhood Assistance Program also helps with 911 addressing of homes, sewer connection assistance, septic system clean out, heirs property, issues street repairs, abatement/demolition, and workforce homeownership programs.

Building Safety Office

- Streamlined the application process and improved customer service;
- Standardized contractor and applicant meetings to a quarterly function to share information and discuss code issues and to introduce code changes;
- Transitioned from the 2012 codes to the 2015 building codes;
- Conducted 12,019 inspections; and
- All building safety staff passed CEPSI (Certified Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control Inspector certification), in order to assist the Watershed Management staff with inspections.

Customer Service Center

- Continue to operate under a 'How can we help' approach to all customers and inquiries;
- Issue same day Certificate of Occupancy (CO) permits; and
- Participate in training and certifications for permit technicians, floodplain management, planning and customer service to enhance our delivery of services and information.



DEPARTMENT OF ENGINEERING

Through its three divisions – project management, public works, and watershed management – the Engineering department provides essential services and project management which:

- Protect the health, safety and welfare of our citizens;
- Enhance the quality of life and economic opportunities for our community; and
- Protect our most treasured natural resources – the May River and other watersheds.

Project Management Division

- Oyster Factory Park –
 - This year the new courtesy dock was built at 170' of floating dock and a wooden observation deck and walkway that doubles as a handicap accessible ramp which also leads to a beach via an access ramp. The dock is made up of aluminum decking on a concrete ground-out pad, concrete pile, and solar dock lights. The observation deck and walkway is made up of treated wood and composite decking with stainless steel handrails and aluminum grab bars.
 - A key element to this construction is the new double boat landing which will double the capacity for boats to launch from OFP and moor on the floating dock while they park at the reconfigured and expanded parking lot.
 - Oyster Factory Park's new parking lot includes five new handicap parking spaces and 75 new spaces to accommodate cars and boat trailers. The new parking area will connect to the dock area via a new tabby walkway with new landscaping throughout and additional drainage improvements in the parking lot. These new improvements to the Oyster Factory Park were funded in part by grants from the DNR and sport fish restoration funds.



IMPORTANT CAPITAL PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- May River Road Streetscape
- Dr. Mellichamp Drive Streetscape
- Garvin House Restoration
- Buckwalter Place Commercial Park
- Buck Island and Simmonsville Neighborhood Sewer Installation
- Jason/Able Street Sewer Installation
- Town Hall Renovation
- Historic District Lighting and Parking Improvements

Watershed Management Division (formerly Stormwater Management Division)

As a result of the Town's Strategic Planning effort which included the May River and surrounding rivers and their watersheds as a focus area, the Stormwater Management Division was renamed the Watershed Management Division to reflect this expanded scope. The Town has continued to implement its May River Watershed Action Plan.

Actions that protected our waterways this past year included:

- Entered into an intergovernmental agreement with Clemson University's Carolina Clear and Beaufort County to implement stormwater public education and outreach and public involvement/participation programming County-wide.
- Approximately 600 volunteers attended the Town's two annual Cleanups. 3,900 pounds of litter was collected, of which 1,953 pounds was recycled and therefore diverted from area landfills.
Installed approximately 176 storm drain markers within the Town of Bluffton's jurisdiction.
- Installed Cove Identification signs at Heyward, Huger, and Verdier Coves.
- Awarded a Clean Water Act Section 319 Grant in the amount of \$231,350 for the May River Preserve Project to create a green tree reservoir.
- Installed floating wetlands at MC Riley Elementary and at the New Riverside Pond to remove nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous from the water.
- Using data derived from the Sea, Lake, and Overland Surges from Hurricanes (SLOSH) model, created a story map of areas throughout greater Bluffton that are vulnerable to storm surge inundation from large storm events.

- Toy Fields Community - As part of the Town's goal to eliminate all the potential sources for fecal contamination in the May River, the Toy Fields community were taken off septic tanks and tied-into the new gravity sewer. In a collaborative effort with BJWSA a new gravity sewer system along with a new pump station was constructed and provided 12 homes with sewer service that will tie them into the existing force-main. This will greatly improve the health and safety conditions to this community. ·
- Buck Island - Simmonsville Sewer - As a continuing effort to provide sanitary sewer to the Buck Island – Simmonsville Community, sewer mains and services were installed along the southerly portions of Buck Island and Simmonsville Roads. The project was funded by a Community Development Block Grant and the Town of Bluffton. Forty-five homes were connected to the system, with an equal number of septic systems being removed from the ecologically sensitive May River watershed. Work has started on the Phase 4, with the fifth and final phase in design.



Public Works Division

- The Public Works Division contributes to the asset management, maintenance and beautification of publicly owned facilities, including:
 - Buildings: Town Hall, Rotary Community Center, Law Enforcement Center
 - Parks and Trails: Dubois Park, Oyster Factory Park, Pritchard Pocket Park, Tom Herbkersman Commons, New River Trail

HURRICANE MATTHEW



The outer bands of Hurricane Matthew swept into Bluffton Saturday, October 8 around 3 a.m., toppling power lines, chopping down countless trees and knocking out power for thousands of Bluffton residents. While residents evacuated in 1999 due to Hurricane Floyd, Bluffton hadn't experienced as

severe of a storm since Hurricane Gracie in 1959. The highest winds were clocked at 88 miles-per-hour on Hilton Head Island, as the storm crept along the southeastern coast about five to 10 miles offshore. While there were many examples of fallen trees barely missing a business or home, there were about 140 damaged buildings in Bluffton. About a hundred of those buildings sustained minor damage, 27 suffered serious damage and six structures were deemed unsafe and uninhabitable. Beaufort County officials estimate more than \$50 million in total storm-related damages countywide however, residents were safe and there were no hurricane-related deaths within the County. After the storm, Bluffton residents quickly



united to clear roads, cut fallen trees, restore power and cook hot meals. Within a week, the majority of Bluffton residents were back at their jobs and resuming their normal lives, thankful for the help and support of their neighbors as the community recovered from this Category 2 hurricane.

"Bluffton's Community Spirit is Stronger than the Winds of Hurricane Matthew." -- Mayor Lisa Sulka



Town of Bluffton

Awards, Achievements & Accolades

Town of Bluffton/General:

- Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) Achievement Award, 10,001-20,000 Population Category, for Bluffton's Old Town Master Plan & Implementation (2016).
- Forbes Magazine named Bluffton one of the "Best Places to Retire in 2016" (April 2016).
- Huffington Post/Travel Section featured Bluffton in an article, "Visiting Sweet South Carolina." (May 2016).
- "Only in Your State," named Bluffton #1 in its list of "10 Up & Coming Cities in South Carolina Ready to Explode" (May 2016).
- Topretirements.com website named Bluffton the 4th "Friendliest Places to Retire" in its Top 10 List. (2016).
- Money Magazine named Bluffton one of the Top 20 Places to Retire in 2015, also naming Bluffton "Top Waterfront Retirement Destination" within the Top 20 list (June 2015).
- Garden & Gun Magazine named Bluffton a "Southern Dream Town." (June/July 2015).
- "Only in Your State" website named Bluffton the 3rd "Safest and Most Beautiful Places to Live in South Carolina." (2015)
- Niche's named Bluffton one of the 2015 Best Places/Safest Towns in South Carolina.
- Niche.com named Bluffton #3, Best Towns to Raise a Family in South Carolina (2015).
- Forbes Magazine named Bluffton one of the Top 25 U.S. Cities for Retirement (2014).
- Family Circle Magazine featured Town Councilman Larry Toomer, his family and his family business, Bluffton Oyster Company (June 2014).
- Southern Living Magazine selected Bluffton as the site for its 2014 Idea House.
- The Huffington Post named Bluffton its #1 destination for its list, "Ten Amazing Non-Beach Alternatives for a Summer Getaway" (2014).
- Only in Your State, The 18 Wedding Venues in SC Which Are Perfect in Every Way, #10 Rose Hill Mansion; #14 Palmetto Bluff (2015).
- NerdWallet, a consumer advisory company, named Bluffton one of the ten "Cities on The Rise in South Carolina," (2014).
- Bluffton's Highway 46 designated a "South Carolina Scenic Byway," by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (2012).
- Don Ryan Center for Innovation/Clemson Technology Village; Bluffton was the first non-metropolitan town in South Carolina to partner with Clemson University to form a private-public Technology Village (i.e. business incubator).

Planning, Growth Management and Urban Design:

- Best Community Revitalization Award from Southern Living Magazine for the Wharf Street Redevelopment Project (August 2014).
- Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) Achievement Award, 10,001-20,000 Population Category, for the Wharf Street Redevelopment Project (2013).
- Palmetto Forum Affordable Housing Achievement Award for the Wharf Street Redevelopment Project (2012).
- Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) Achievement Award, 1,000-5,000 Population Category for the Bluffton Small Home Series (2003).

Environmental Protection and Beautification:

- Charleston's Post & Courier article, "Bluffton is an Innovator in Using Development Rights Transfer Program to Reduce Sprawl," (August 2014).
- Tree City USA Designation from the Arbor Day Foundation (2013, 2012, 2011).
- Inaugural Sustainable Communities Building Block Program Participant selected by the Environmental Protection Agency (2010).

Law Enforcement/Bluffton Police Department:

- Hope and Opportunity Award of Excellence, Boys & Girls Club of the Lowcountry (2016).
- Arrhythmia Alliance Achievement Award for helping raise \$50,000 to install AEDs in each officer's patrol vehicle within the Bluffton Police Department (2016).
- National Night Out, National Town Watch Associates (2015).
- Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), Accreditation with Excellence, the highest level of recognition of the reaccreditation process (2015).
- South Carolina Law Enforcement Accreditation (SCLEA), 2013.
- Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) Re-Accreditation for the Bluffton Police Department (2012).
- Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) Accreditation for the Bluffton Police Department (2009).

Financial Management:

- AA+ Municipal Bond Rating upgraded by Standard's & Poor (2014).
- Aa2 Municipal Bond Rating issued by Moody's (2010).
- Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (2015, 2014, 2013, 2012 and 2011).
- Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Award for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009, 2008).
- Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting (PAFR) from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (2014, 2013, 2012, 2011).

Historic Awards & Designations:

- Preserve America Community Designation for the Bluffton Historic District by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (2005).
- National Register of Historic Places Designation for the Bluffton Historic District by the National Park Service (1996).

Palmetto Bluff:

Bluffton is also home to Palmetto Bluff, a 19,217 acre world-renowned residential community and resort, which consistently receives top awards and accolades

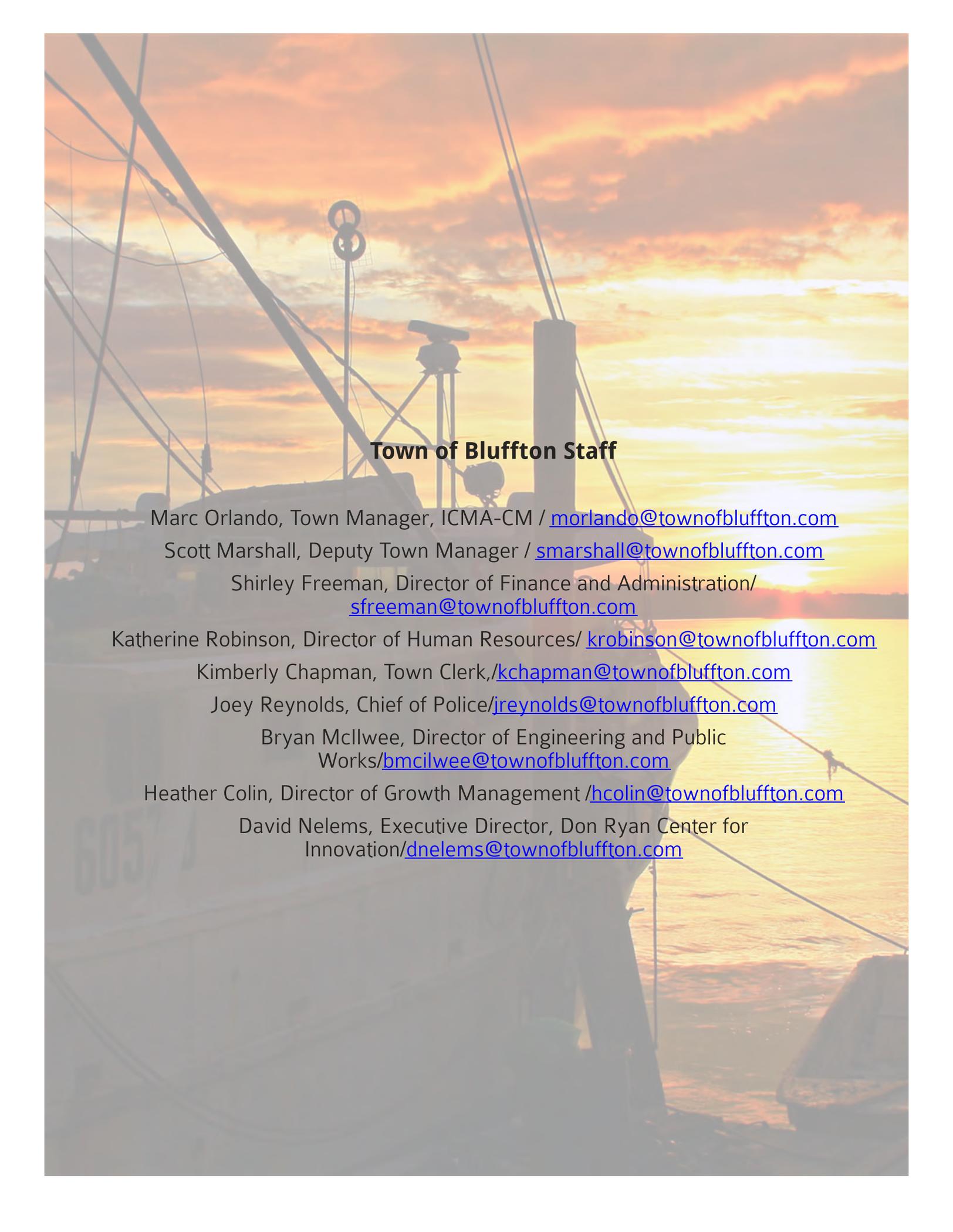
- Palmetto Bluff celebrated its grand debut of Montage Palmetto Bluff in August 2016. Montage Palmetto Bluff is AAA 5-diamond resort with 200 rooms, six dining locations, 13,000 square foot spa, and many other resort amenities.
- U.S. News & World Report ranked Palmetto Bluff as one of the best hotels in the United States for 2015.
- Yahoo Travel News: The Coolest Hotel in Every State, The Inn at Palmetto Bluffton (October 16, 2014)
- Travelers Choice Award by Trip Advisor; Rated No. 8 Top 25 Hotels in the United States (2013).
- Readers' Choice Award by Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report; Rated No. 9 Top U.S. Hideaway, No. 5 Top Family Resorts (2012).
- Top 100 Golf Courses by Golf Magazine; Rated No. 51 (2012).
- World's Best Hotels for Families by Travel + Leisure; Rated No. 4 in Continental U.S. and Canada (2012).
- Five-Diamond Award by AAA; Most Luxurious Accommodations in North America (2013, 2012, 2011).
- World's Best Award by Travel + Leisure; Rated No. 6 Top Resort in Continental U.S., No. 79 Top 100 Hotels Overall (2012).
- Best Hotels in the USA by US News & World Report; Rated No. 1 U.S. Hotel (2012).
- Top Golf Resorts in the World by Condé Nast Traveler; Rated No. Southern U.S. Resort (2012).
- Top 270 Spas by Condé Nast Traveler; Rated No. 15 (2012).
- TENNIS Magazine Top 50 Tennis Resorts; Rated No. 3 South Carolina Tennis Resort (2012).
- Readers' Choice Platinum List by Celebrated Living (2012).



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