

County Connection

October 2024

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Stay Engaged. Click the logos to join us on social media



Cooling off

The weather appears to be cooling and I am sure many of you will welcome the respite from the heat of the summer and may again be looking to spend more time outside with your families. Okaloosa County maintains more than three dozen parks which are excellent venues to satisfy your urge to spend more time outdoors.

Regular maintenance and recent upgrades have added additional value to those who visit them. New playgrounds have been installed and the bathroom amenities have also been improved at many County parks.

I encourage you to take a break from your digital devices and explore the various parks in our County including the beach parks in the south and the river parks in the north. A full list can be found at myokaloosa.com/fpm/parks/list.

The outdoors offers a limitless amount of enjoyment and I'm proud that Okaloosa County is able to contribute to the recreational lifestyle that is valued by Okaloosa residents.

Enjoy your time off, be safe, and as always reach out to me or your department head if you need anything.



John Hofstad
County Administrator

Okaloosa Commissioners advocate for passenger railroad expansion in North Florida



Okaloosa County commissioners approved a letter requesting Governor Ron DeSantis and state legislative leaders to join the Southern Rail Commission, aiming to explore passenger rail service through the Florida Panhandle. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa to purchase 229 acres along Shoal River in Crestview for public access



Deputy County Administrator Craig Coffey presented the proposal, describing it as “the icing on the cake that really opens up the doors of things that you have already done as a board.” [READ MORE>>](#)

WM opens \$30 million state-of-the-art recycling facility in Fort Walton Beach



The new state-of-the-art plant aims to increase material recycling and reuse in the Gulf Coast region, processing up to 76,000 tons annually. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa County buys SS United States for \$1M.



The project's funding comes from the county's tourist development dollars, funded through the expanded bed-tax district. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa County Public Library Cooperative helps over 50 adults earn high school diplomas



The Career Online High School program offers online classes with 24/7 access, support from certified instructors, and academic coaches. [READ MORE>>](#)

Peanut...Peanut Butter!

New this year - The Extension Office is holding a competition to see which organization in Okaloosa County can collect the most peanut butter for the 2024 Peanut Butter Challenge. The competition begins October 1 and runs through the month of October.

Email: bearden@ufl.edu to sign up.



Champion of the Bay

Congratulations to Kali Hiemier, Okaloosa County's Environmental Resource Coordinator and Director of Keep Okaloosa Beautiful, who was recently awarded the prestigious Mike Flynt Bay Champion Award by the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA). Kali has been partnering for years with the CBA to complement their efforts with education to youth and the community about protecting the resources in our environment through responsible handling of litter, recycling education and beautification.



Training Zone Challenge

More Okaloosa County leaders have earned their Training Zone challenge coins. There are 11 Training Zone classes in the program but eight core classes focus on policies and procedures. Any foreman, supervisor or manager who completes the eight core classes (since 2022) earns the Training Zone Challenge Coin. Pictured from l to r: Chuck Cooper, Greg Richards, Jr., Jody Harvey, Lauren DeShong, Tess Hartley, and Abra McGill. Not pictured are Darren Alford and Elizabeth Eidson. Any foreman, supervisor or manager who wants to sign up for courses, [login](#) to Training Zone or to find out what classes you are lacking, contact Becca Autry at 850-689-5873."



COHS Class of 2024

Congratulations to this year's graduates from Career Online High School (COHS). The Okaloosa County Public Library Cooperative has worked over the past five years to help 52 adults graduate from COHS. The program seeks to help adults achieve their high school diplomas despite many obstacles they have encountered in their lives. Learn more at <https://readokaloosa.org/cohs.ocplc>



October Milestones



Congratulations to these County employees who are celebrating their work anniversaries. Pictured with County Administrator John Hofstad and County Commissioners is Tyson Eager, 2 years, Public Works, Marcus Nelson, 25 years, Public Works Roads Division, Darren Faircloth 2 years, Parks, and Shawn Harrington, 30 Years, Facility Maintenance.

OTHER MILESTONES

- Eduardo Garcia Collart, 2 years, Public Works
- Marcus Nelson, 25 years, Public Works
- Joseph “Butch” Parker, 2 years, Public Safety
- Michael Clarke, 5 years, Facility & Parks Maintenance
- Zoe Barrow, 2 years, Facility & Parks Maintenance



In Case You Missed It

Regular Board Meetings

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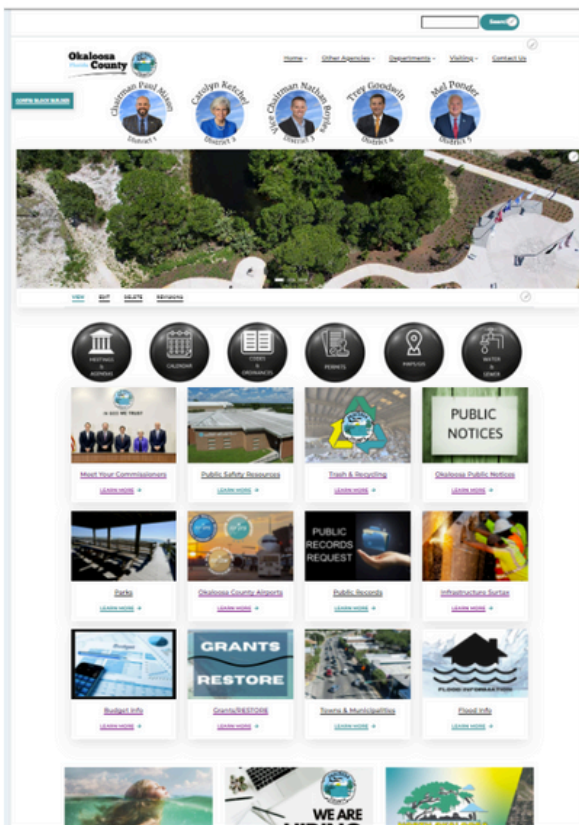
Oct. 1 - Meeting notes

- Board approved funding Design Report for Yellow River Pedestrian Bridge along the Florida Trail.
- Board authorized use of tourism funding for acquisition, remediation, transport, and deployment of the historic ocean liner, SS UNITED STATES.
- Board approved funding for purchase of about 230 acres of land along the Shoal River.

Oct. 15 - Meeting Notes

- Board received update on Real Estate market from ECAR.
- Board approved infrastructure agreement for Bypass easement for Northwest Crestview Bypass.
- Board approved additional funding for DOMES facility.
- Board was presented with Final Report for North Okaloosa Planning Study.

TIDBITS



MYOKALOOSA.COM

The new MyOkaloosa.com website launch was a success and we hope you have had the chance to browse through it. Thanks for your patience as we worked through some adjustments in the first week.

For any questions or concerns, please reach out to Nick Tomecek at ntomecek@myokaloosa.com