

TOWN OF HIGHLAND BEACH • OCT 2024

# MANAGER'S MONTHLY



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# MESSAGE FROM YOUR MANAGER

As we continue to navigate hurricane season, I am pleased to announce that the Town Commission has successfully finalized the Fiscal Year 2025 budget. This important milestone ensures that our beloved "3 Miles of Paradise" remains secure and well-positioned to address the needs of our community both now and in the future. It's always a pleasure to share that our financial health remains strong and our community vibrant.

With the support of the Financial Advisory Board, the Town Commission has approved a balanced and fiscally prudent \$28 million budget. This budget reinforces our commitment to strengthening public safety, investing in critical capital improvements, and replenishing reserves that were utilized to establish our Fire Rescue Department and construct our new fire station. Notably, we achieved all this without raising the millage rate, which remains at 3.5875—one of the lowest in both Palm Beach County and South Florida.

As Police Chief Hartmann often says, "Life is good on the island!" With the approval of this budget, the Town Commission has also laid the groundwork for the celebration of Highland Beach's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. A dedicated group of residents has been appointed to help guide the Manager's Office in planning a series of special events and experiences that will bring our community together in honor of this momentous occasion. The ad-hoc committee has already begun meeting and taking the first steps in planning these celebrations.

We are also thrilled to continue our cherished partnership with Father Horgan and St. Lucy Catholic Church to kick off our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations on December 5th with our Annual Mingle Jingle Event. This will be the first of many collaborative events planned throughout the season, and we encourage everyone to save the date!

On behalf of the Town Commission and staff, we are incredibly excited about the future of Highland Beach. As we reflect on the past 75 years, we believe this is just the beginning, and we look forward to welcoming home our seasonal and traveling residents.



Finally, I want to take a moment to reflect on the solemn 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony held at our Fire Station. It was an honor to deliver a heartfelt address in front of residents, elected officials, and our dedicated police officers and firefighters/paramedics. The event began with the presentation of colors by Highland Beach Color Guard and an impassioned invocation by our Public Safety Chaplain, Father Horgan, which set a fitting tone for the day.

During the ceremony, I spoke about the importance of honoring the nearly 3,000 lives lost on that tragic day 23 years ago. The bravery of our first responders, whose courage saved so many others, continues to inspire us all. I also took the opportunity to personally thank our police officers and firefighters/paramedics for their tireless service and dedication. Furthermore, I acknowledged the unwavering commitment of our Town Commissioners to providing the best public safety services to our community. Together, we pledged to continue building a future rooted in resilience, compassion, and unity.

I encourage all residents to take this moment to reflect on the enduring spirit of service that makes Highland Beach such a special place and to express their gratitude to those who work every day to keep us safe.



# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN HIGHLAND BEACH?

## Upcoming Agenda Items (Subject to Change and Additional Items may be Added)

- Strategic Priorities – FY2024-25 Updates
- Discussion of old fire station project
- Continued discussion of marine facilities ordinance amendments
- Continued discussion of Milani Park
- 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

## Board Vacancies

Board of Adjustment & Appeals - One (1) vacancy for a three-year term.

For additional information, please contact the Town Clerk's Office at (561) 278-4548 or email [lgaskins@highlandbeach.us](mailto:lgaskins@highlandbeach.us) (Lanelda Gaskins) or [jdehart@highlandbeach.us](mailto:jdehart@highlandbeach.us) (Jaclyn DeHart), Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

## Official Retirement of Old/Worn US Flags – Sunday November 10<sup>th</sup> at 11:00

Saint Lucy Catholic Church will be hosting an official retirement of old/worn US Flags on Sunday November 10<sup>th</sup>, at 11:00 AM in front of the Church, with light refreshments to follow. Participants are welcome to bring their flags to the event or drop them off at the Rectory Office, Monday through Friday, between 9:00 am and 3:00 pm.



## Calling All Highland Beach Historians!

As part of the Town's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Holiday Celebration, the Library will be showcasing a "History of Highland Beach" exhibit this holiday season. No one knows this Town better than you, our residents, which is why we need your help in telling our history!

If you have any historical items such as news articles, photographs, or any other Highland Beach memorabilia that you would like to share, please reach out to Library Director Lois Albertson at [lalbertson@highlandbeach.us](mailto:lalbertson@highlandbeach.us) or 561-278-5455.

SAVE  
THE DATE!

# ♪ Mingle & Jingle ♪

Celebrate the Holiday Season & the

## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Highland Beach!

When?

Thursday, Dec. 5, 2024 | 5:00pm – 8:00pm

Where?

St. Lucy Church Parking Lot

What's Happening?

Food & Entertainment

Community Vendor Fair

First Responder Meet & Greets

Donation Drive to Support a Local Charity and much more!

Join us for  
an event filled with  
holiday cheer and  
community giving!



Event produced by the Highland Beach Police and Fire Foundation

# COMMUNITY

## Board Member Spotlight – John Verdile (Financial Advisory Board)



John J. Verdile, President and Founder of XpenseSolutions Energy Advisory Services, has partnered with clients to develop comprehensive energy programs that address cost, operational and process efficiency goals for over 30 years.

As Director of Energy Consulting for one of the nation's largest integrated energy companies, he was responsible for managing an \$800 million energy portfolio focused on electric power and natural gas procurement, in addition to risk management.

In March 2005, Mr. Verdile formed XpenseSolutions, a company focused on reducing its clients' total cost of

energy. Since forming XpenseSolutions, John has developed and managed comprehensive energy programs for commercial, industrial and healthcare clients including risk management and operational efficiency.

After visiting Highland Beach Florida for 25 years, John, his wife Jennifer, and their Maltese, Lilly, purchased their home here in March 2021.

# POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Sharing the Road with School Buses

The start of the school year officially began on Monday, August 12<sup>th</sup>. Returning to school also means the return of school buses on our roads, increased traffic around school zones, and more pedestrians and bicyclists in neighborhoods and, for this school year we face additional challenges with the on-going roadway construction.

Here are some important reminders for all drivers as the new school year begins:



- If you're driving behind a bus, allow a greater following distance than if you were driving behind a car. It will give you more time to stop once the yellow lights start flashing. It is illegal in all 50 states to pass a school bus that has stopped to load or unload children.
- Never pass a bus from behind – or from either direction if you're on an undivided road – if it is stopped to load or unload children
- If the yellow or red lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended, traffic must stop
- The area 10 feet around a school bus is the most dangerous for children; stop far enough back to allow them space to safely enter and exit the bus
- Be alert; children often are unpredictable, and they tend to ignore hazards and take risks.

Our residents' safety is our top priority, and staying vigilant on the roadways is essential to ensuring everyone's well-being.

## FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT

### Highland Beach Fire Rescue Launches Community Connect

Highland Beach Fire Rescue is excited to introduce Community Connect, a cutting-edge program designed to enhance the safety and well-being of our residents. Community Connect is a secure, user-friendly platform that allows residents to share vital information with Fire Rescue personnel. By providing key details about your household, we can respond more effectively and efficiently to protect your loved ones and property during emergencies.



**Highland Beach Community Connect**

Together, Building a Safer Community Through  
Prevention, Preparedness & Response

**CREATE OR UPDATE YOUR PROFILE TODAY**

**Community Connect**

**Highland Beach Fire Station No. 120**

Link to Community Connect Website: <https://www.communityconnect.io/info/fl-highlandbeach>

## **Key Benefits of Community Connect**

**Life Safety** - Your safety is our top priority. Community Connect ensures your information is secure and used solely to improve our emergency response capabilities. The platform employs bank-level encryption and password protection, offering you peace of mind when sharing sensitive details.

**Enhanced Property Protection** - Sharing information about your residence type, fire safety systems, and designated meeting places enables our team to respond more efficiently during emergencies. This knowledge allows us to make informed decisions that can minimize damage and enhance the safety of your property.

**Improved Communication and Coordination** - Provide emergency contact details to help us communicate effectively with the right people when it matters most. Whether accessing your property, addressing hazards, or locating occupants, having these contacts ensures smoother and quicker coordination during critical moments.

**Catering to Individual Needs** - If you or your family members have mobility challenges or other specific needs, letting us know in advance allows us to plan and respond with the necessary resources and urgency. This proactive approach ensures that everyone receives the assistance they need promptly.

**Pet Safety** - Pets are cherished members of your family, and their safety is important to us. By sharing information and photos of your pets, we can ensure they are evacuated and cared for appropriately during an emergency.

## **How to Get Started with Community Connect**

**Register** - Visit our secure Community Connect website to create an account. The registration process is simple and intuitive, ensuring that you can quickly start providing the information that will help us better protect you.

**Provide Information** - Complete your profile by entering critical details about your household, property, contacts, special needs, and pets. This information will be securely stored and only used to enhance our emergency response.

**Stay Engaged** - Keep your information current and engage with our team through the platform. Regular updates ensure we have the most accurate information to serve you best.

**Join Us in Building a Safer Community** - By participating in Community Connect, you are taking an active role in enhancing the safety and resilience of our community. Your contribution allows Highland Beach Fire Rescue to provide the highest level of service and protection to you and your neighbors. Together, we can create a safer, more prepared community.

# BUILDING DEPARTMENT

## Important Considerations for Allowing Vacation Rentals in Highland Beach Condominiums

Condominium owners, board members, and managers in Highland Beach need to be fully aware of the implications of allowing units to be used as vacation rentals through platforms like Airbnb and VRBO. While short-term rentals can provide an additional income stream, they also introduce significant regulatory, safety, and legal challenges. Here are key points to consider:



## Local Ordinance Requirements

### **Highland Beach Vacation Rental Ordinance:**

- Registration and Annual Inspections:** The Town of Highland Beach mandates that all properties used for vacation rentals be registered annually. This process ensures compliance with local regulations and includes annual safety inspections to verify that the property meets all health and safety standards.
- Compliance with Local Laws:** Vacation rentals must adhere to strict standards regarding occupancy limits, parking, and noise control. Non-compliance can lead to severe penalties, including fines, suspension of the rental license, and other legal repercussions.

## Fire Safety and Building Code Implications

### **Florida Building Code (FBC) Requirements:**

- Change in Use and Occupancy Classification:** Using a condo unit as a vacation rental alters its classification under the FBC to a more restrictive occupancy type. This change necessitates compliance with more stringent fire safety requirements, which can be both complex and costly.

2. **Enhanced Fire Alarm Systems:** The new occupancy classification demands the installation of advanced fire alarm systems, including extensive smoke detection, sprinkler systems, and manual pull stations. These upgrades are essential for protecting transient occupants but can be expensive and technically challenging to implement.
3. **Egress and Emergency Lighting:** Vacation rentals must have clearly marked and accessible emergency exits, along with proper emergency lighting to ensure safe evacuation during a fire.

### **Florida Fire Prevention Code (FFPC) Compliance:**

1. **Fire Safety Inspections:** Properties used as vacation rentals are subject to regular fire safety inspections to ensure ongoing compliance with the FFPC. These inspections are crucial for maintaining a safe environment for guests but add another layer of responsibility for property owners and managers.
2. **Liability and Insurance:** Non-compliance with fire safety regulations can result in significant legal liability. Insurance policies might need to be updated to cover the increased risks associated with short-term rentals, potentially leading to higher premiums.

### **Additional Considerations:**

1. **ADA Compliance:** Allowing short-term rentals may subject the condominium to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. This includes making common areas accessible and possibly modifying facilities to accommodate individuals with disabilities, potentially involving significant modifications and additional costs.
2. **Homestead Tax Exemption:** Renting out a homestead property for short-term stays can result in the loss of the homestead tax exemption. Under Florida law, renting a property for more than 30 days per calendar year for two consecutive years constitutes abandonment of the homestead.
3. **Community Impact:** Short-term rentals can disrupt the sense of community within a condominium, leading to potential conflicts among residents over issues such as noise, security, and shared resource usage.

### **Conclusion**

While the financial benefits of short-term rentals are enticing, condominium owners, board members, and managers in Highland Beach must carefully weigh these against the regulatory, safety, and community implications. Ensuring compliance with local ordinances, the Florida Building Code, and the Florida Fire Prevention Code is essential to mitigate risks and protect all residents and guests. For detailed information on the local ordinance, you can refer to the Highland Beach Town Code and consult with legal experts specializing in condominium and rental property law. **Ultimately, the decision to permit vacation rentals should not be taken lightly. It opens a Pandora's box of issues that require diligent management and oversight to prevent potentially severe consequences for the entire condominium community.**

## **FLOOD INSURANCE NOTICE**

For decades, the Town of Highland Beach has been an active participant in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). This participation is crucial as it allows our residents to acquire flood insurance through the NFIP, which is significantly more affordable than private insurance options. Without our town's involvement, residents would be forced to seek expensive private flood insurance coverage.

We are now making a concerted effort to get Highland Beach back into the Community Rating System (CRS) with FEMA. Achieving this status can lead to discounted flood insurance rates for our residents. To accomplish this, we need your help.

We are asking all residents to bring in their elevation certificates so that we can scan them and return them to you immediately. This simple action will help elevate our standing with FEMA and contribute to our goal of re-entering the CRS program.



You can bring the original elevation certificate to the Building Department for us to copy, or if you have an original PDF, you can email it to [permits@highlandbeach.us](mailto:permits@highlandbeach.us).

Your cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated and will benefit the entire community. We aim to make this process as convenient and positive as possible, so please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your continued support and participation in making Highland Beach a safer and more resilient community.

## Code Tip of the Month: Hiring Licensed Contractors

It's a horrible feeling to find out the person or company you hired to perform work on your property has performed a sub-par job, not finished your project, or skipped town all together with your money. The fact is, that this happens all too often in South Florida. Because of this, it is important that when you are hiring someone to perform work at your home, you hire a Licensed Contractor for the type of project you need. When you hire a Licensed Contractor, you save yourself immense liability from poorly done work, stolen money, safety for your personal property and safety for your health and well-being. A licensed contractor will obtain a permit from the town so that it will be assured that the work will be performed based on professional plans, using appropriate materials and inspected along the process to assure quality work according to the most current standards. Specialty work like electrical, plumbing, structural and mechanical, if not performed by a professional and inspected by an expert, could cause severe damage to your home, adjoining homes or even worse, injury to yourself or your family. It's true that you may be paying a little more money up-front when you hire a Licensed Contractor, but this investment will pay dividends in the long run. This is not to say that there is no place for the Handyman who can perform all types of minor work and repair on your property, but when it comes to specialized/permited work, the only way is to hire a professional. If you have any questions as to what type of work requires permits and a Licensed Contractor, you can contact the Highland Beach Building Department at 561-278-4540 and staff will be glad to assist.

# PLANNING AND ZONING

### How to Reduce Impacts to Sea Turtles From Beach Furniture:

- Remove furniture from the beach nightly – At night, furniture should be completely removed from the beach and stored behind the primary dune. Please remember, heavy equipment is not allowed on the beach during nesting season. When possible, all furniture should be moved by hand.
- Stack and arrange furniture – Marine turtles prefer to nest on the mid to upper beach, protecting their nest from the high tide. Furniture that is left on the beach at night can prevent nesting turtles from reaching the upper beach (see Figure 1). If furniture cannot be removed at night, it should be stacked to minimize interference with nesting or hatching sea turtles (see Figure 2). Arrange the stacked furniture with the shortest edge facing the shoreline.

- Place furniture properly – No furniture should be placed on the beach until a nesting survey has been completed by a Marine Turtle Permit Holder, who will identify and mark nests. Place furniture at least five feet from any marked nest. Furniture should not be placed on salt-resistant vegetation or on the dunes.
- Use an umbrella holder or sleeve – To the degree possible, avoid burying umbrella poles during sea turtle nesting season. Either anchor an umbrella holder or sleeve before the nesting season to use throughout the summer or use umbrellas that clamp directly to the furniture.

\*If you see someone disturbing a sea turtle nest or see a dead, injured, or harassed sea turtle, please call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 1-888-404-FWCC.\*

For more information on sea turtle nesting, please contact Ingrid Allen, Town Planner, at 561-278-4540 (ext. 3).

Figure 1

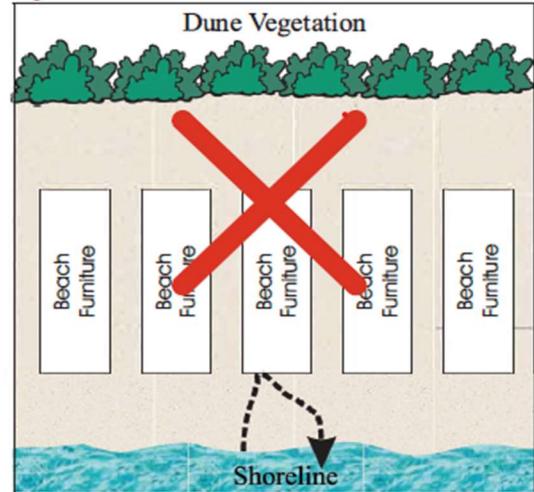
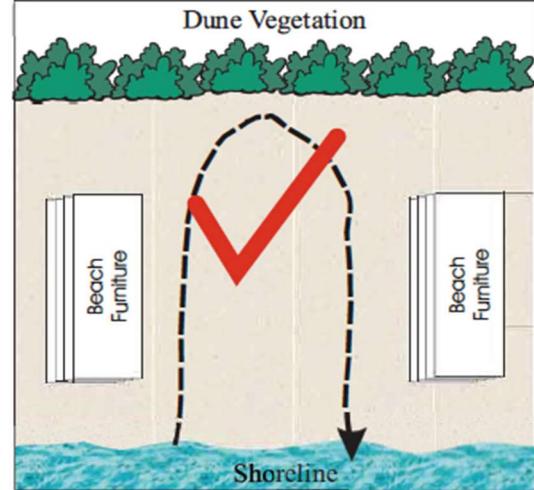


Figure 2



# LIBRARY

As Fall approaches, we look forward to welcoming our seasonal patrons back to Highland Beach. The Library staff have been busy planning a variety of cultural programs and activities to keep you entertained, including the return of the book discussion group and a new yoga class beginning in November. Thanks to the generous support of the Friends of the Highland Beach Library, we have an array of music events scheduled, as well as the opening of our next art exhibit, "New Voices" featuring works by art students from Palm Beach Atlantic University.

## Library Hours:

Monday – Thursday	10:00 AM to 8:00 PM
Friday	10:00 AM - 4:30 PM
Saturday	9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

## **Upcoming Events:**

Concerts – at 5:30 PM

- October 10<sup>th</sup>: JayCee (cabaret)

Movies – at 5:30 PM

- October 1<sup>st</sup>: Arthur the King
- October 15<sup>th</sup>: The Boys in the Boat
- October 29<sup>th</sup>: A Haunting in Venice

Other Activities:

- Learn to download eBooks: call for appointment
- Current Events Discussion Group: Saturdays at 10:30 AM
- Small Fry Story Time plus Crafts on Wednesdays at 4:30 PM, ages 4 and up
- Toddler Time: Stories and Rhymes on Saturdays at 10:30 AM, ages 2 and 3

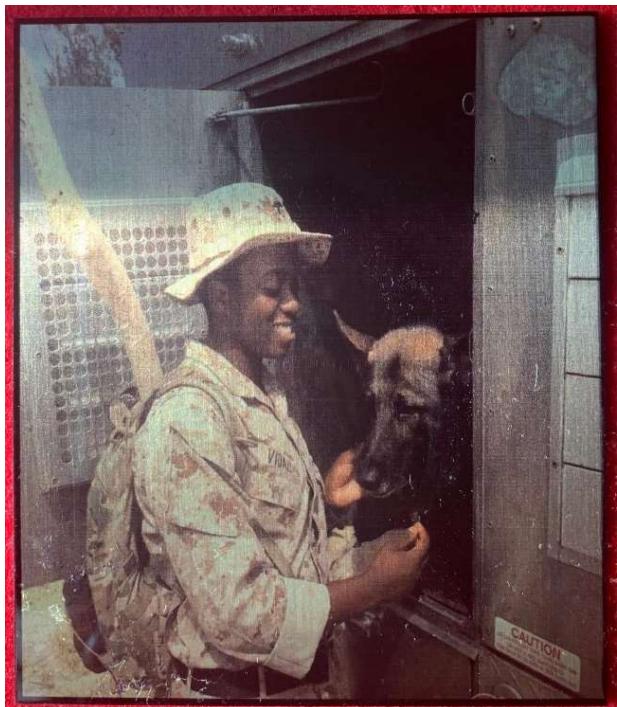
Call us at 561-278-5455 for more information.



# OUR NEW FORMER MARINE HAS SKILLS!

## WELCOME ALISHA VIDAL BY JOHN SHOEMAKER

In a continuing effort to recognize those Veterans who live in Highland Beach or serve our community, we share a short story of each and post it on our town website: [www.highlandbeach.us](http://www.highlandbeach.us) and specifically [Veteran Heroes of Highland Beach | Highland Beach, FL](#). Please visit this tab to read stories and profiles of our citizens who have served or are serving our country and our town.

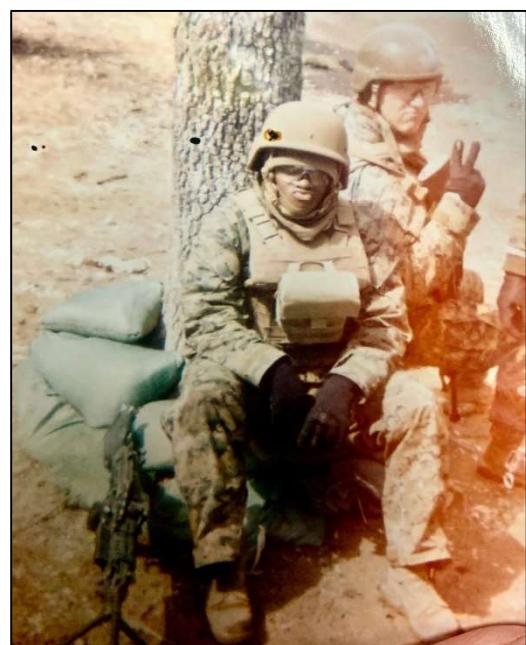


Alisha Vidal, a unique figure in our community, was born and raised in Hollywood, FL, where her parents still reside. She graduated from Stranahan High School and spent three years in the ROTC program. Alisha's journey took an interesting turn when she enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in July 2012, with a specific goal of joining the MPs or military police. Following boot camp and four months of intensive training in Missouri, she embarked on a two-year assignment at Camp Hanson, Okinawa, Japan, where she could use her special skills.

Then, Alisha went to Houston for three months of training to take on a new challenge as a canine police officer. After training, she went back to Okinawa for another year of

service. As a Sergeant, she learned how to work with a specially trained dog as a Canine Handler and focused on Combat Training, searching for IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and drugs, and tracking people. During her daily activities, she learned a great deal about how to care for the dog, rigorous training, and especially tending to health-related issues, including vaccinations and other shots, medications, blood work, checking injuries, and more.

Returning from Okinawa, Alisha was assigned to Quantico for canine security details. The assignment was the same unit used for the advanced clearing of venues where the President of the United States would visit.



After five years in the Marines, Alisha decided to seek a new career in the medical field. Her interest in working with canines had peaked, and she looked for the next step, so she attended EMT school for three months at the Broward Fire Academy and McFatter Technical College.

However, needing to have more income, she joined Constellis Corporation, where she operated with a canine to search and clear large mail warehouses for explosives and other suspicious materials. Working seven days a week, ten hours a day for months was grueling. She also wanted to start school to be a Paramedic. She left Constellis and completed her Paramedic training in 2022.

With all this background, she went on to become an RN, or registered nurse, when she graduated from the Health Care Institute (HCL) with an Associate's Degree in 2023.

With all this training complete, what does Alisha do? She spent six months in the last half of 2023 training at the Fire Academy in Broward. And yes, she completed this and is now a trained

canine operator, EMT, Paramedic, Nurse, and Firefighter!

When she heard of the opening at Highland Beach, she was excited as it was close to her home in Hollywood. Even being an original Floridian, she did not know of our little town but immediately fell in love with it. The new station and new team are an excellent opportunity for her to be part of the effort to develop and maintain a superb operation of fire and emergency medical personnel.

For Alisha, it is essential to build relationships. She loves a small town where she can get to know many of the residents. Then, there is the beach, where she joins other firefighters to run and stay in top physical condition. She is clearly hard-working, with a great work ethic and a sense of community commitment.

So, please welcome Alisha, our multi-talented fire safety and emergency medical technician, to our new Fire Station, Number 120, in Palm Beach County.





Dear Highland Beach Resident:

October 2024

I hope this letter finds you well!

Did you know that our Highland Beach Police and Fire Departments respond to thousands of public safety calls each year?

**OUR FIRST RESPONDERS KEEP US AND OUR PROPERTIES SAFE AND SECURE EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR.**

The Highland Beach Police and Fire Foundation (the Foundation) was established over ten years ago to bolster the services and infrastructure that our Town's budget cannot fully support. Thanks to your generous, tax-deductible contributions, we've been able to make significant enhancements, including:

- Upgrading crucial technology and emergency safety equipment for our officers.
- Purchasing body-cams and in-car video cameras.
- Adding an Emergency Traffic Message Board.
- Providing an all-terrain vehicle for beach emergencies.

**WITH YOUR SUPPORT, WE CAN CONTINUE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR FIRST RESPONDERS!**

Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to the Foundation. These are the ways you can make your donation:

1. Donate online at: [hbpff.org](http://hbpff.org)
2. By mailing the enclosed form
3. Taking your check to the Police or Fire Department at Town Hall
4. Scan the QR code



EVERY dollar you contribute goes directly to the Foundation to support our Highland Beach Police and Fire Departments. NOW is the time to show your support.

**The Highland Beach Police and Fire Foundation is an IRS-approved 501(c)(3) non-profit.**

Thank you for your continued generosity,

Jason Chudnofsky  
Chairman

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Florida Department of Agriculture, Division of Consumer Services at 1-800-HELP-FLA, or by going to <https://www.fdacs.gov/ConsumerServices> and searching "Check-A-Charity". Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state.

**HighlandBeachPoliceAndFireFoundation.org**



## ***Highland Beach Police and Fire Foundation***

In 2012, the *Highland Beach Police Foundation*, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit, was established by Highland Beach residents. The Foundation, which was created to support the efforts and enhance the services of the Highland Beach Police Department, is governed by a voluntary board of directors made up of residents in the Town.

Over the years, the Foundation has raised funds that have supported the pursuit of advanced technology, training and improved equipment for the department.

In 2023, the decision was made to incorporate the newly formed Highland Beach Fire Rescue Department into the non-profit, to create the *Highland Beach Police and Fire Foundation*, to support all our First Responders.

Our Foundation and its Board of Directors recognize the support and appreciation received from residents, and we are confident that the *Highland Beach Police and Fire Foundation* will only strengthen the department's ties to the community and increase our ability to provide "Excellence" in Public Safety services to our residents.

For more information visit the website [hbppf.org](http://hbppf.org)



**We**  
A heart-shaped logo for the Highland Beach Police and Fire Foundation. It features a blue and red heart outline. Inside the heart is a stylized sun with rays and the text "HIGHLAND BEACH POLICE AND FIRE FOUNDATION".  
**our**  
**POLICE**  
**&**  
**FIREFIGHTERS**



## **TOWN COMMISSION**



Mayor Natasha Moore  
Email: [nmoore@highlandbeach.us](mailto:nmoore@highlandbeach.us)  
Phone: (561) 278-4548



Vice Mayor David Stern  
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Commissioner Evalyn David  
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Commissioner Judith Goldberg  
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Commissioner Don Peters  
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