



# DINING OUT

Few of us living along the Crystal Coast could have missed the multiplication of new restaurants in recent years. Most of these restaurants are part of national or regional chains familiar to us whether we have lived here forever or moved here in recent years. They survive and apparently thrive because they promise us good food at modest

prices. Still, many of us on the coast prefer stand-alone restaurants, sometimes tucked away in local nooks and crannies rather than in places more obvious to the eye.

Tucked away in the Atlantic Station Shopping Center in Atlantic Beach is one such place: the Monkey Bar and Grill. The restaurant serves both lunch and dinner in an atmosphere that may seem like a throwback to the good old days of the comfortable neighborhood restaurant familiar to many of us from years past.

The lunch menu at the Monkey Bar offers burgers, sandwiches and subs, familiar choices, yes, but often the "comfort" food we crave. Among the burgers are basic four- and eight-ounce options, served with or without cheese. Included here also are seafood burgers with flounder, shrimp or tuna steak substituting for beef. For the substantial appetite, the bill of fare includes the "Congo Burger," twelve ounces of beef topped with lettuce, tomato, onion, bacon and pineapple, accompanied by onion rings. Sandwich and sub offerings feature long-familiar contents such as ham, roast beef and turkey; or homemade chicken and tuna salad; or meatballs, steak and ribeye beef. There is even a pure vegetable option. These items are nicely priced between \$5 and \$11. They are served at both lunch and dinnertime.

The dinner menu at the Monkey Bar provides some interesting entrées. In addition to the historic southern "comfort dish" shrimp and grits, options include pasta creations such as Mediterranean shrimp over pasta and lobster ravioli blanketed by crab Florentine, spicy mango-habanero chicken and pan-seared tilapia with "tropical" salsa. Also available are a mixed seafood dinner and a 10-ounce ribeye steak. Most of the dinner entrées are priced between \$10 and \$20.

Of course, the Monkey Bar offers a range of drinks to accompany meals, including soft drinks, beer and wine. The wine choices are varied and priced very reasonably.

The Monkey Bar and Grill phone number is 726-2552. The Atlantic Station Shopping Center is on Route 58 in Atlantic Beach.

## Strategic Planning Session

By Yvette Bannen

On January 17 and 18, Pine Knoll Shores Board of Commissioners met at the Hampton Inn to conduct its annual planning session for Fiscal Year (FY) 2013-2014.

The first day started with a review of the Town's vision and mission statements by the mayor. An itemized list was made of various projects and goals that were accomplished during FY 2012-2013 including the Mimosa Blvd bridge, sand fences on the beach and a new website.

Goals and projects identified for FY 2013-2014 include East-end storm water project, beach plan, financial and policy goals, a campaign for volunteers, refinancing/reexamining debt, schedule for public services/road maintenance, outreach to second-home owners, automatic water meter readers, firefighter/VIPS incentives, long-term strategy, 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, renovation of town hall kitchen and bathroom, sidewalks, economic and community development, bird/nature trail, entrance signs to town, funding for Historical Committee, land use plan with changing demographics, town property dispersal, town art and elections.

During the afternoon session, there was discussion of capital projects for the next five years. Some of the projects planned for FY 2013-2014 are a digital recording system for town meetings, an upgrade to the server at the Public Safety Building, an on-site inspection from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement (CALEA), replacement of a 1998 public services truck, replacement of heating and air conditioning units at the Public Safety Building, replacement of one of the mowers used on the rights of way and canal and channel dredging. These projects and how they will be funded will be discussed during budget planning meetings held February 25 through March 8—the first of which will be with department heads.

Police Chief Lepore gave a report on the structure and function of the Pine Knoll Shores Police Department. She noted that some of the items are mandated by state and federal regulations.

A joint meeting of the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners was conducted. Some of the goals of the Planning Board were discussed, including updating the Land Use Plan.

A tract of land on the west side of Pine Knoll Boulevard that must be used for recreational purposes was discussed. It was noted that the challenges for use of this property are the topography and wetlands.

Also discussed was the pedestrian master plan. At this time, there is no social/political/economic impetus to move forward with an east-west sidewalk similar to what is in Atlantic Beach and Emerald Isle.

Whether or not to proceed with conversion to an automatic water meter reading program was debated, especially how it would be funded. The final vote was 4-1, with Commissioner Corsello voting against it. Commissioners in favor of converting agreed that the process should be phased in over a four-year period starting on the East End, where the oldest meters are located.

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