

# THE GEEK CORNER

By Dan Law

Are you one of the many Microsoft customers still using an older computer that's running on Windows XP software? Microsoft has said that nearly 30% of all its software users are still running this 12-year-old operating system. The time has come when you really need to look into buying a newer operating system, especially

after April 8 when Microsoft will discontinue security updates and patches for Microsoft Security Essentials anti-virus software for XP users.

Microsoft offers the following on its website:

"... after April 8, 2014, technical assistance for Windows XP will no longer be available, including automatic updates that help protect your PC. Microsoft will also stop providing Microsoft Security Essentials for download on Windows XP on this date. (If you already have Microsoft Security Essentials installed, you will continue to receive anti-malware signature updates for a limited time, but this does not mean that your PC will be secure because Microsoft will no longer be providing security updates to help protect your PC.)

"If you continue to use Windows XP after support ends, your computer will still work but it might become more vulnerable to security risks and viruses. Also, as more software and hardware manufacturers continue to optimize for more recent versions of Windows, you can expect to encounter greater numbers of apps and devices that do not work with Windows XP.

"To stay protected after support ends, you have two options:

#### "Upgrade your current PC

"Very few older computers will be able to run Windows 8.1, which is the latest version of Windows. We recommend that you download and run the Windows Upgrade Assistant to check if your PC meets the system requirements for Windows 8.1 and then follow the steps in the tutorial to upgrade if your PC is able. For more detailed information, read the FAQ.

#### "Get a new PC

"If your current PC can't run Windows 8.1, it might be time to consider shopping for a new one. Be sure to explore our great selection of new PCs. They're more powerful, lightweight, and stylish than ever before—and with an average price that's considerably less expensive than the average PC was 10 years ago."

If you want to upgrade your operating system from XP to Windows 7 Home without having to buy a new computer, you can still buy the Windows 7 download from Best Buy, amazon.com or newegg.com for about \$80. Just be sure that if you plan to install Windows 7 on an older computer that you buy their standalone 32-bit software and *not* the newer software that uses 32/64-bit software that is being sold for newer, faster computer systems. The good news is Microsoft plans to support Windows 7 until 2020.

I highly recommend that you consider purchasing a new computer instead of just loading a newer operating system onto your old one. Important for upgrading your PC:

- Older computers are running on a much slower 32-bit hardware system, instead of the more modern and much faster 64-bit hardware. The 32-bit may be too small to accommodate a new operating system download.
- Failing to upgrade now will only result in more issues to resolve in the near future.

Rumors abound about Microsoft's plans to cut the cost of upgrading from XP software and suggest that Microsoft will offer continued updates for a monthly price, but so far they are only rumors.

Replacement computers can be purchased locally for as little as \$300, but keep in mind that better quality, better security and faster operating speeds will come at a higher cost. Also, if you buy your new computer from a local store that also offers technical support, you will be able to get help transferring your files from your old working computer.

If you choose to ignore these warnings and continue using your XP operating system, you run the risk of having your computer infected with some really nasty Trojans, malware, spyware and key loggers that will actively steal your identity. This may be the time you want to consider Linux as an alternative to Microsoft—or make the much more expensive leap to a Mac. Whatever you do, just leave XP behind.



Here are some of the things going on in Pine Knoll Shores this glorious spring.

**Next dinner with the mayor.** The next dinner with Mayor Ken Jones will be on April 11 at 5:30 p.m. at the Clamdigger Inn.

**Smart water meters.** We have completed our test with Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative (CCEC) to see if smart meters can transmit usage data to the CCEC headquarters in Newport (they can). We are now examining the pros/cons of having

water bills sent to you with your electric bill—that is, your CCEC electric bill would have the Pine Knoll Shores water bill on the same piece of paper, and you would make one payment for both utilities. On April 24 at 6 p.m., we plan a brief to the Board of Commissioners on the entire water meter project. This will be at town hall.

**East End Stormwater Project.** By the time you are reading this, the project should be largely completed. In addition to installing the drainage lines, we are reading water table levels at monitoring wells on two sites in town. Hopefully, starting this year we will be able to connect the dots between water table levels, recent rainfall amounts and predicted rainfall amounts in order to start moving water to Bogue Sound before we have massive flooding on the east side of town. I want to remind all that this system will not prevent localized standing water, but we hope it will prevent 11 days of standing water on Oakleaf Drive, Myrtle Court and Juniper/Yaupon/Willow roads.

**Sale of town's oceanfront lot.** As mentioned last month, the town has decided to sell the oceanfront lot at 117 Knollwood via a sealed bid process. If you are interested in submitting a bid, you can find more information on the town's website at townofpks.com. Bids will be opened on May 8.

**Sidewalks.** We expect to start construction on the project the first week of April. The completion date is May 9. The plans for the two segments we are building are on display at town hall.

**Budget planning—timeline for next fiscal year.** The table below provides the timeline for our remaining meetings for next year's budget. I suggest you call Town Clerk Scott Sherrill at 247-4353, ext. 11, to check for any changes before you arrive for a meeting. All budget meetings are open to the public.

DATE	TOPIC
April 10, 6 p.m.	First Monthly Regularly Scheduled Board of Commissioners' Meeting
April 18	Budget Worksheets to Board
April 24, 6 p.m.	Second Monthly Regularly Scheduled Board of Commissioners' Meeting Discussion of FY 2014-2015 Budget
May 8, 6 p.m.	First Monthly Regularly Scheduled Board of Commissioners' Meeting Discussion of FY 2014-2015 Budget (if needed)
May 22, 6 p.m.	Second Monthly Regularly Scheduled Board of Commissioners' Meeting Budget Message; Presentation of Proposed Budget; Call for Public Hearing
May 23, 4 p.m.	Mayor's Budget Brief and Webinar
June 12, 6 p.m.	First Monthly Regularly Scheduled Board of Commissioners' Meeting and Budget Hearing; (vote no later than June 30)