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## City Council Weekly Update - May 11, 2025

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**From** Bret Bell <bret.bell@cityoftybee.gov>  
**Date** Sun 5/11/2025 9:37 PM  
**To** #Council <#Council@cityoftybee.org>  
**Cc** #Dept Heads <#DeptHeads@cityoftybee.org>

 1 attachment (974 KB)

Analyzing Homestead Exemption Data on Tybee Final Report.pdf;

### **Greetings Mayor and Council!**

Thanks again to everyone for participating in the two-day Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel on Memorial Park. Lots of great dialogue, and very interesting to hear different perspectives from both the panel and the community.

The ULI will work over the next month on a final report, and then schedule a public presentation, likely at the July City Council Meeting. A reminder that we did not hire the ULI as a traditional consultant to develop a Memorial Park Plan according to our specifications. Instead, this will be an independent report created by volunteer experts, who will utilize their skills and experience to frame ideas about land-use and process to improve one of Tybee's most important public spaces.

I know a big question remains whether the City should attempt to work with the Tybee Island Maritime Academy on a new facility for the school in Memorial Park. While the ULI panel members heard a lot about the topic, I do not expect the final report to make recommendations one way or the other. Instead, I expect the report to make recommendations about appropriate locations and massing of future buildings in the park, no matter the use of those buildings.

As you know, Alan Robertson of AWR completed a study and citizen survey surrounding Memorial Park last year. The report and survey can be found here: [\[Memorial%20Park%20Report%20AWR\]Memorial Park Report AWR](#)

### **Orange Crush Partners Split**

As you may be aware, the former business partners who organized this year's Orange Crush Festival have parted ways, and are now competing to put on an event in 2026.

Steven Smalls was the City's primary contact throughout the 2025 permitting process; he was joined at some of our meetings by George Turner. The two had a fallout a few weeks before the Festival, and Mr. Turner did not participate as an organizer during the April 19 event.

Shortly after the festival, we began receiving correspondence from Mr. Turner claiming he held the trademark for the name Orange Crush Festival, and demanding that everyone cease using the name. He also submitted a special event permit application for a three-day Orange Crush Festival in April 2026, and claimed in news releases and social media posts that both I and Mayor West had verbally given the OK for a three-day festival, which is false. Steven Smalls last week also submitted a special event permit application for an event in April 2026.

I have yet to act on either permit application, and do not plan to grant any permit this far in advance. I am working with City Attorney Hughes on a response this week.

### **Electric Vehicle Charging Stations Coming to South Beach**

I'm happy to report that the City is the recipient of two grants from Georgia Power that will result in four new electric vehicle charging stations capable of charging eight EVs simultaneously in the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Parking Lot.

In the fall I initially applied for below-ground infrastructure for new charging stations through Georgia Power's Make Ready program. Through the course of that process, I was directed to a separate Georgia Power grant program that installs above-ground EV charging stations. As a result, the City will be the recipient of complete charging infrastructure at no additional cost to Tybee.

The charging stations will be located at eight angled spaces near the South Annex public bathrooms, where a group of handicapped parking spaces is now located. The handicapped spaces will be relocated immediately adjacent to the ramp at the 15 ½ Street Crossover, making them more accessible to the beach.

The charging station location adjacent to Code Compliance offices is designed to allow public EVs to utilize the stations during the day, and the City's Code and Parking vehicles to utilize the charging stations overnight. We are actively working with our Enterprise representative to lease EVs for City use, as outlined in our new Sustainability Plan.

Construction is scheduled to begin over the next 1-2 months, and should last a few weeks.

### **Landscaping Improvements Coming to US 80 Medians**

Work is scheduled to begin over the next two weeks to install new landscaping in the U.S. 80 medians near Lazaretto Creek. The medians, which serve as one of the gateways onto the island, are in rough shape. An irrigation system failed some years ago, and flowers that require watering quickly died, creating bare spots. Fires and accidents took out other landscaping.

We do not plan to reinstall the irrigation, but will instead fill in the bare spots in the median with more of the drought-tolerant muhley grass and other species that have done well in this space. Total cost of the project is about \$30,000.

### **Final Report: Potential Misapplication of Homestead Exemptions on Tybee Island**

Attached please find the final report submitted to the City of Tybee that analyzes potential misapplication of homestead exemptions on Tybee Island. The report estimates that the City is losing up to \$150,000 or more annually due to misapplied homestead exemptions filed with the Chatham County Board of Assessors. The report is part of a package we received – which also includes Excel databases and a presentation – created by a team of UGA Graduate Students participating in a Local Government Practicum program.

Some background: In the fall I submitted an application to the Georgia Municipal Association Local Government Practicum Program. The GMA annually pairs a local government in Georgia with a group of graduate students at the University of Georgia to work on an impactful project for that government over the course of a semester. It's a structured program designed to integrate classroom learning with practical experience, guided by a professor. There was no cost to the City.

The project I pitched was for the students to analyze potential misapplication of homestead exemptions on Tybee Island. The project was inspired by Councilwoman Williams, who in the fall forwarded me an article about a Philadelphia resident who discovered a number of property owners improperly claiming homestead exemptions on their properties, costing the City more than \$11 million in lost property tax revenue.

I've met with the four students and their professor periodically since the beginning of the year, and connected them with various County officials. The students are Korean nationals participating in the UGA School of Public and International Affairs in Athens.

Their analysis of Tybee's 1,015 homestead-exempt properties revealed the following:

- 69 properties held active STR permits despite claiming exemptions, while an additional 56 properties could not be verified due to incomplete unit-level address data.
- 99 properties showed mismatches between mailing and physical addresses, including 85 properties with out-of-city mailing addresses; another 495 properties used P.O. Box addresses, limiting residency

verification

- 14 exemptions were claimed by seven individuals across multiple properties: 4 additional exemptions involved highly similar names, which require further verification.
- 66 properties listed business entities or trusts as the tax bill recipient; while most were held in the name of trusts and required further review, two cases showed strong indicators of misapplication.

After removing overlapping cases, the project concluded that **168 properties** (17 percent of all homestead exemptions) had potentially misapplied homestead exemptions. Another 526 properties require further investigation due to limited or inconsistent data.

The estimated annual property tax revenue loss due to potential misapplications ranges from \$120,000 to \$150,000.

The students created several databases with these suspect properties, and made recommendations for verification, which may involve on-site inspections and integration of additional data sources, such as utility records or vehicle registrations.

We are working with Georgia Southern University to secure a summer intern who could potentially help us with this final verification.

### **Code Compliance This Week**

#### **Citations**

Smoking on the Beach	4
Pets on the Beach	2
Littering	2
Disturbing Dune Vegetation	1
Glass on the Beach	1
Dog at Large	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Cart Inspections** 19

**Wheelchair Checkouts** 5

#### **Week of April 21-29 Activity:**

- Code Compliance was dispatched to 1114 Jones Ave. regarding a report of a deceased dog. An officer responded and learned that the deceased animal was a grey in color cat. There was no collar or tag on the cat, so the officer scanned the cat for a chip. No chip was located. The cat was safely and humanely removed from the scene and was later disposed of in a proper manner.
- A Code Compliance Officer was at TIPD in preparation to leave for the night and observed a large box turtle in the parking lot. The officer captured the turtle and relocated it to a safer location.
- Code Compliance assisted with traffic control for the barricade crew
- Code Compliance assisted TIPD and TIFD with searching for a missing handicapped, adult, female that had walked away from her family in the 16<sup>th</sup> Street parking lot. The CC Supervisor located the female sitting outside of Wet Willies. The family was then notified, and the CC Supervisor remained with the female until her family arrived to get her.
- Code Compliance responded to 9 5<sup>th</sup>Ave. regarding a complaint of unpermitted work being done. When the officer arrived at the location an inspection of the location was done, and no violations were observed. Site information was emailed to the Community Development Office.
- Code Compliance was dispatched to the beach between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>Streets for a deceased loggerhead turtle. An officer responded and stood by with DPW until personnel from DNR and the Marine Science Center arrived to investigate.
- Code Compliance was advised of a lost dog in the area 2 Gabby Lane. Officers kept and watched for the dog while on patrol. The dog was later found by a guest and taken to TIPD. The dog was later

reunited with its owner.

- While on beach patrol a CC Officer observed what appeared to be a group of underage people consuming alcoholic beverages near Fisherman’s Walk. The activity was called in to TIPD. TIPD responded and the situation was handled by them.
- Code Compliance was dispatched to the parking lot at Sunrise Restaurant for an animal confinement call. An officer responded and found no violations.
- Code Compliance received an email from the Community Development Office requesting an inspection of possible unpermitted work being done at 1 8<sup>th</sup> Street. An officer responded and spoke with the crew and their supervisor, requesting that work be halted until a permit is obtained. A Notice of Violation was posted at the site for unpermitted work. The officer also emailed the City Marshal and the Director of Community Development with pictures of the work being done.
- Code Compliance assisted with the removal of a dead shark from the beach.
- Code Compliance gave a courtesy ride from the beach to a guest that was an amputee.
- Code Compliance was dispatched to 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. regarding a complaint of a dog confined in a car. Upon arrival the officer found the car to be ventilated, and the dog had food and water. The dog showed no signs of distress at the time. No violations were observed.
- Assisted TIFD with transportation on the beach for three distress calls. One near Captain’s Watch, one near Polk Street, and one near Gulick Street. All persons were safely recovered.
- Code Compliance took a turtle to the Marine Science Center for care.

**Parking Revenue Year to Date**

<b>MONTH</b>	<b>FY2025</b>	<b>FY2024</b>	<b>GAIN/LOSS</b>
JULY	\$1,070,704	\$1,200,607	-\$129,903
AUG	\$679,586	\$701,020	-\$21,434
SEPT	\$447,400	\$630,213	-\$182,813
OCT	\$376,017	\$416,828	-\$40,811
NOV	\$200,387	\$210,757	-\$10,370
DEC	\$22,345	\$77,354	-\$55,009
JAN	\$152,287	\$146,744	\$5,543
FEB	\$286,795	\$238,367	\$48,428
MARCH	\$542,160	\$546,818	-\$4,659
APRIL	\$863,706	\$685,106	\$178,601
<b>TOTAL THRU APRIL</b>	<b>\$4,641,387</b>	<b>\$4,853,814</b>	<b>-\$212,427</b>
MAY	(thru May 8) \$221,133	\$976,524	#
JUNE	#	\$1,165,611	#

**The Week in Infrastructure**

**DPW**

- Cleaned and repaired beach crossovers on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday.
- Completed beach trash clean up Monday and Friday.
- Patched holes with cold patch on 17<sup>th</sup> Place.
- Repaired boards on the 17 ½ Crossover.
- Fixed the speed bump on Polk Street.

- Cleaned out Inlet.
- Cleaned storm drains.
- Removed graffiti from signs and changing rooms.
- Repaired boards on Fisherman’s Walk pier
- Repaired East Gate Crossover.
- Relocated sand back onto the beach at Alley 3.
- Pressure washed sidewalks from 15th Street to Tybrisa (both sides), and from Tybrisa to Silver Avenue.
- Completed work orders at the Marine Science Center.
- Completed YMCA work orders.
- Repaired door at North Beach restroom.
- Replaced flush valve in women’s restroom at North Beach.
- Picked up beach trash Friday.
- Performed trash runs on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
- Picked up litter throughout assigned areas.
- Cleaned and maintained all public facilities.
- Cleaned and restocked public restrooms.
- Mowed and trimmed grass in parking lots and ditches.
- Blew debris from parks, sidewalks, and surrounding areas.
- Maintained and cleaned the area around black box.

**Recycling/Dump**

- Serviced both cardboard trailers Monday and Friday (3 bales collected).
- Completed the aluminum recycling program route.
- Serviced and cleaned both green trailers.
- Assisted by a community service worker.
- Collected yard cardboard.
- Picked up oyster shells.
- Cleaned up around main yard.
- Completed street recycling.
- Monitored the scale.

**Fleet**

- Completed the monthly fuel depot inspection.
- Repaired lights on tractor/trailer.
- Replaced battery and inspected the fuel pump on truck 412.
- Checked tire pressure on City mules.
- Operated sweeper truck on Monday and Friday.
- Replaced brakes and rotors on the Fire Department F-150.
- Cleaned shop and organized filters, tires, and tools.

**Arborist**

- Four tree risk assessments.
- Assessed tree removal plan with builder.
- Began development of island-wide tree planting plan

**The Week at the Police Department**

**Accidents:**

This Week: 4 accidents, 1 injury  
 2025 YTD: 34 accidents, 2 injuries  
 2024 YTD: 30 accidents, 3 injuries  
 2024 TOTAL: 104 accidents, 18 injuries

**Arrests:**

This Week: 3 total – 1 DUI / 0 Felonies  
 2025 YTD: 136 arrests  
 2024 YTD: 211 arrests  
 2024 TOTAL: 504 arrests

**Calls For Service:**

This week: 286  
 2025 YTD: 4,955  
 2024 YTD: 5,394  
 2024 TOTAL: 14,588

**Citations:**

This week: 13  
 YTD: 531  
 2024 YTD: 827  
 2024 TOTAL: 1,792

Part 1 Crimes									
-	Homicide	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Arson	Motor Vehicle Theft	Total Part 1
2025	1	0	0	1	1	10	0	0	13
2024	0	3	0	10	3	51	0	0	67
2023	0	0	3	8	2	37	0	0	50
2022	0	0	0	2	1	17	2	1	23

**Daily Information:**

From Chief Hayes: Last Friday, I received a call from an investigator with Columbia County requesting assistance. A suspect who shot one of their deputies and killed another was reportedly on Tybee Island just prior to the incident. The incident occurred during a traffic stop, and the suspect had active warrants.

The suspect, James Blake Montgomery (now deceased), checked in at the Sandcastle Inn on 04/25/2025 around 0100 hours and checked out on 04/27/2025. After speaking with the investigator, FLOCK was utilized and I was able to obtain video footage from the Sandcastle Inn.

Please note, the reason for this email is to remind everyone to always rely on your training and stay alert. Keep your head on a swivel and remain visible in the community. This could have been one of us if TIPD had encountered him here. Story here: <https://www.wrdw.com/2025/04/28/heres-what-we-know-about-deputies-killed-injured-i-20-clash/>

**Other updates:**

- Cadet Jake Parker started with the police department. He will train with TIPD and then begin the Police Academy in Savannah in early July.
- The front handicap ramp at the public safety building was rotting. A work order was put in through DPW, and the ramp was fixed.
- Ofc. Bensman and K9 Tosca joined Irondog K9 International in Brunswick at the Grand Design RV Rally, which helped raise \$6,000 in donations to Irondog International K9. Irondog K9 International graciously donated Tosca to the department.
- Command Staff registered through CEMA for 5 free classes throughout the year to obtain their Critical Infrastructure Protection Certificate.
- TIPD hosted its 74<sup>th</sup> K9 for a day. Capt. Randolph has been sharing ideas and information with the San Diego Humane Society after they expressed interest in potentially forming their own K9 For a Day Program.
- TIPD is down 5 officers and have 4 applications. Of the 4 applicants, 1 has completed the oral interview, psychological test, and polygraph exam. We will continue to move on with the other 3 applicants. We currently have 1 officer on light duty on workers' compensation.

**Upcoming Events:**

05/13: After hearing back from TIPD staff and assisting agencies, command staff will have an After Action Review of public safety during Orange Crush 2025.

05/17: I'm proud to say our running group has grown! This year, we will have 13 members of our police department participating in The Savannah Mile! If you would like to participate with us, cheer us on, or

donate to the cause, please click here: [https://www.our200club.com/savannah-mile-2025/?fbclid=IwZXh0bG9hZWF0bWABhZGkAAAGG86I-QQBHdAC-QMMYG8siypVR9M6FrC3M6\\_ThrQYIMpRoTZz8HDnkSGDRPfSJ-\\_rrg\\_aem\\_-zXsaSZ0LUvGwwPcJwVdIA&utm\\_medium=paid&utm\\_source=fb&utm\\_id=6716498362188&utm\\_content=6716498392188&utm\\_term=6716498386188&utm\\_campaign=6716498362188](https://www.our200club.com/savannah-mile-2025/?fbclid=IwZXh0bG9hZWF0bWABhZGkAAAGG86I-QQBHdAC-QMMYG8siypVR9M6FrC3M6_ThrQYIMpRoTZz8HDnkSGDRPfSJ-_rrg_aem_-zXsaSZ0LUvGwwPcJwVdIA&utm_medium=paid&utm_source=fb&utm_id=6716498362188&utm_content=6716498392188&utm_term=6716498386188&utm_campaign=6716498362188)

*The Savannah Mile returns for 2025! This highly anticipated race is scheduled for 8 a.m. Saturday, May 17, as part of National Law Enforcement Week. The one-mile course, beginning at the south end of Forsyth Park, will take participants down Drayton Street and finish up on Broughton Street.*

*Featuring six unique heats for all ages and abilities, including the "Memory Walk" and "Heroes Heat", you won't want to miss this event! All proceeds benefit the families of our Fallen First Responders that the 200 Club proudly serves.*

05/22: GCIC Audit

**\*\*\*\*Please let Chief Hayes know if you have anyone interested in the summer camp below. This camp is put on through the Georgia FBI NAA and is great for college resumes!**

YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

SAVE THE DATE

JULY 13TH – 18TH

Georgia Military College

Nominations can be made through your law enforcement agency now.

Requirements:

- Sophomore, Junior or Senior in High School at the time of the academy
  - Your department vets the applicant. This program is for future leaders. This person represents YOUR agency.
  - Applicant wants to attend; not sent because of punishment or only because their parents want them to attend.
  - Cost: The nominating agency agrees to pay the \$1,000 fee to sponsor the applicant
- Please send any questions to Chief Chuck Atkinson at [chuck.atkinson@doravillega.us](mailto:chuck.atkinson@doravillega.us)

## **The Week at the Fire Department**

This report provides a categorized summary of the Tybee Island Fire Department's call activity for the week of May 3 to May 9, 2025, along with updates on operational developments, including lifeguard training initiatives, equipment maintenance, and preparations for the upcoming Memorial Day weekend. All incidents were responded to promptly, and all calls are marked as closed.

### **Call Count by Incident Type**

Below is the categorized breakdown of the 20 incidents handled during the reporting period:

- **Medical Assist, Assist EMS Crew:** 7 incidents
  - Locations: 28 Estil Hammock Road, 78 Van Horne, 7 Naylor Avenue, 1402 Butler Avenue, 1609 Strand Avenue Apt 307, 26 Van Horne, 1801 Chatham Avenue
- **EMS Call, Excluding Vehicle Accident with Injury:** 6 incidents
  - Locations: 1213 Bay Street, 1213 US-80, 0 North Beach Jetties, 6 Horsepen Point Drive, 1412 Miller, 30 Van Horne Avenue
- **Assist Invalid:** 5 incidents
  - Locations: 26 Van Horne Avenue, 1711 Chatham Avenue, 1600 Strand Avenue, Beach/Tybrisa (south of the pier) and Tybrisa Street, 1801 Chatham Avenue
- **Emergency Medical Service, Other:** 1 incident
  - Location: 26 Atlantic Avenue
- **No Incident Found on Arrival at Dispatch Address:** 1 incident
  - Location: Alley 3 and Chatham Ave
- **Dispatched and Cancelled En Route (Fire Alarm):** 1 incident
  - Location: 4 Gabby Lane

### **Operational Updates**

#### **1. Junior Guards USA Contract**

The Tybee Council passed a resolution to sign a one-year contract with Junior Guards USA to operate youth lifeguard camps on Tybee Beach. This initiative aims to engage local youth in meaningful summer activities while fostering a pipeline of trained lifeguards to address longstanding staffing challenges. The program is expected to teach critical skill sets, including:

- **Water Rescue Techniques:** Training on safe and effective methods for rescuing individuals in distress in open water.

- **First Aid and CPR:** Instruction on providing immediate medical assistance for injuries and emergencies.
  - **Ocean Safety Awareness:** Educating participants on rip current identification, wave dynamics, and beach hazard recognition.
  - **Physical Fitness and Endurance:** Developing swimming proficiency and stamina required for lifeguard duties.
  - **Teamwork and Communication:** Building skills for coordinating with other guards and emergency responders.
- We are optimistic that this partnership will yield long-term benefits for both the community and our lifeguard staffing needs.

## 2. Equipment Maintenance

Ongoing repairs and maintenance continue for our side-by-sides and jet skis. Currently, two side-by-sides are out of service pending repairs, and one jet ski requires fiberglass work. We are prioritizing these repairs to ensure full operational capacity ahead of the busy summer season.

## 3. Lifeguard Tower Deployment and Staffing Preparations

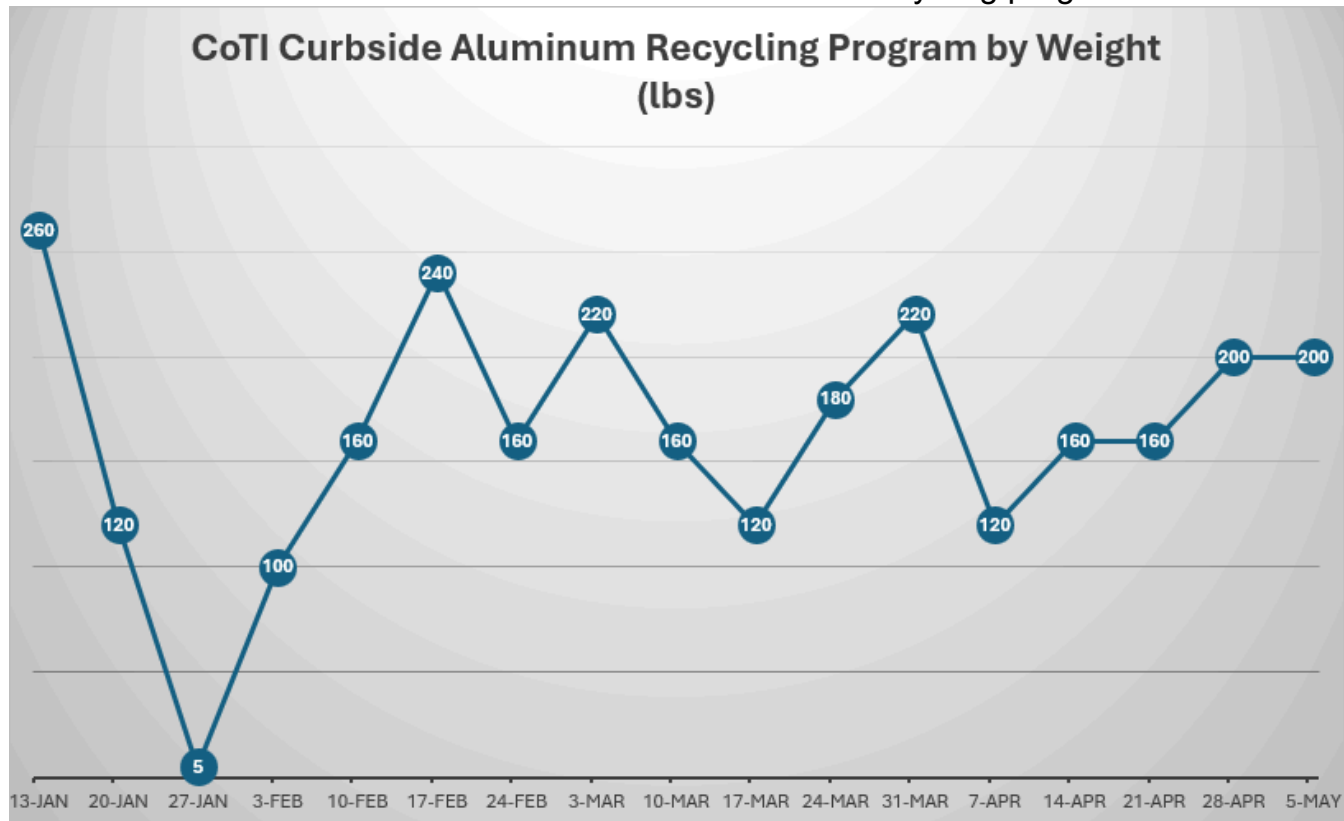
The Department of Public Works (DPW) will assist in deploying lifeguard towers next week in preparation for the Memorial Day weekend. We are ramping up staffing to reach full capacity, targeting 15 guards per day, including dedicated personnel for the south end sandbar. Additionally, we are collaborating with Code Compliance and DPW to replace storm-damaged signage at the south end before the holiday weekend to enhance safety and visibility.

### Notes

- The department responded to a total of 20 calls, with the majority being medical-related incidents (Medical Assist and EMS Calls).
- No major incidents or unresolved calls were reported during this period.
- The department continues to maintain efficient response times and coordination with EMS crews.
- Preparations for the Memorial Day weekend are on track, with a focus on equipment readiness and staffing.

## Community Planning and Development

Below is the latest on our commercial curbside aluminum recycling program:



## The Week at the Campground

- 49 arrivals, 228 Site nights, Occupancy of 65%
- Held Live music and paint and sip events for guests

- Hosted Chesapeake Academy field trip in all 8 cabins.
- Focused on tree trimming throughout the campground maintaining clearance for RVs.

## **Municipal Court Monthly Report - April**

### **Year to Date**

	<b>FY 2023</b>	<b>FY 2024</b>	<b>FY 2025</b>
<b>Court Fines</b>	\$ 182,780.94	\$ 198,336.01	\$ 180,922.22
<b>Tech Fees</b>	0	0	\$ 2,050.00
<b>Court Costs</b>	\$ 65,817.42	\$ 73,366.91	\$ 50,187.46
<b>Total</b>	\$ 248,598.36	\$ 271,702.92	\$ 233,159.68

### **Adjudicated Year to Date**

	<b>FY 2023</b>	<b>FY 2024</b>	<b>FY 2025</b>
<b>Cases</b>	2145	3252	1474
<b>Citations</b>	2798	4395	2263

### **Zoom Video Arraignment Hearings**

	<b>FY 2024</b>	<b>FY 2025</b>
<b># of Hearings</b>	10	4
<b># of Defendants</b>	25	12

### **April 2025 Stats**

#### **Caseload**

	<b># of Court Sessions</b>	<b># of Cases</b>
<b>April 2023</b>	2	264
<b>April 2024</b>	2	308
<b>April 2025</b>	2	218

### **Citations with Disposition Dates from April 01, 2025 – April 30, 2025**

<b>Finding</b>	<b>Count</b>
Bond Forfeiture	29
Bound over to State Court	30
Bound over to Superior Court	7
Dismissed	0
Guilty as Charged	49
Merged	18
Nolo Contendre	8
Nolle Prosequi	12
Pre-Trial Diversion	18
Warning	35
Retired from Docket	0
Voided	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>

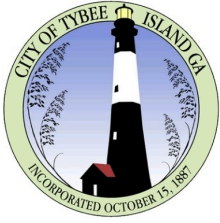
#### **Projects:**

Adjudication Study – Ongoing  
 Record Retention – Ongoing  
 Website Updating – Completed

#### **Training and Education:**

**CLERK:** GMCCC, Mentoring new Municipal Clerk in Midway. Police, Fostering Positive Community Relationships, Front Porch Information Session

**ASSISTANT CLERK:** Front Porch Information Session



[www.cityoftybee.org](http://www.cityoftybee.org)

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