

# ELECTION SPECIAL JUNE 2022



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OKALOOSA ISLAND LEASEHOLDERS  
ASSOCIATION

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## ELECTION SPECIAL

**DATE: Monday, June 27, 2022**– This meeting will be to conduct the election of directors. That will be the only business conducted at the meeting. **TIME:** 6:30 p.m. **PLACE:** The Association Room at The Breakers condominium, 381 Santa Rosa Blvd and via Zoom. For more details see the OILA Election Meeting Agenda in this newsletter.

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- by Jim Simpson



***BLOOD MOON OVER  
OKALOOSA ISLAND  
May 16, 2022***

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

This is my last OILA President's Letter, at least for now. My 3-year term expires later this month, and OILA's Bylaws prevent directors from running for re-election without taking a year off.

The terms of three other OILA Directors, Rick Deckert (Vice President), John Donovan (Secretary), and Brick Bradford also expire this month. I'd like to thank them all for their service to Okaloosa Island, and the help they have been to the OILA membership and to me.

I'd also like to thank the 3 Directors whose terms are not expiring this year, Ed Henderson, Jesse Hunt, and Jack Pous, and give a special thanks to Jim Simpson for his service as Treasurer and Editor of the OIL Lantern for roughly 28 years, and to Cynthia Henderson who has moderated OILA's facebook page for nearly 3 years.

OILA is much more membership driven than it was 3 years ago. When speaking with or before the County, we have wholeheartedly supported the OILA membership approved positions on issues. We conducted a comprehensive membership survey to discover the members' priorities. It was the first such effort I recall in my many years attending meetings. Beach issues were the top 3 OILA Survey priorities: get East Pass sand for Okaloosa Island when East Pass is dredged; preserve our Dunes; and identify a better sand source if the Island ever needs restoration.

We worked closely with Okaloosa County to complete an Okaloosa Island Volunteer Dune Planting (nearly 500 volunteers planting 200,000 Sea Oats and Panic Grasses over nearly 3 miles of beach frontage), and to complete a Temporary Groin Project (natural beach building, preliminary results are encouraging, final data collection and analysis due in July).

We met regularly with Okaloosa County officials regarding the above projects plus East Pass sand, sand source quality, the Federal Shore Program, protecting and preserving the Okaloosa Island Protective Covenants and Restrictions, Santa Rosa Blvd changes and lane reduction, and other timely topics. We called upon contacts in several County departments as needed, including Parks Maintenance, Code Enforcement, Growth Management, and Public Works. I'd like to thank them all, too many to name here, for their courtesy and their support.

We reconstituted the ARC (Architectural Review Committee, an OILA standing committee) and put an exceptional new ARC team in place: Nick Hall, Ed Henderson, and Brian Smith. This isn't something we were looking to do – it was thrust upon the OILA Board when the prior ARC issued a letter to many Okaloosa Islanders announcing the imposition of ARC application fees, among other changes, without the knowledge or consent of the OILA board.

Covid-19 forced us to move our meetings to Zoom, then when Covid waned, we began “joint” meetings with attendance both in-person and by Zoom. Some members came back to meeting in-person, while others (even some who live on the Island or nearby) continued attending by Zoom. Having joint meetings helped increase attendance and participation. OILA's membership is bigger now than when I was elected president in 2019. We have now added video capabilities so our Zoom and in-person attendees can see each other as well as hear each other. We now also play videos, mainly from County Commission meetings, and powerpoint presentations that both types of attendees can see and hear.

OILA's record keeping has improved thanks to our Secretary, John Donovan, who established a permanent electronic record of OILA correspondence. The new ARC adopted a similar approach to keeping a permanent electronic record that can be passed along.

Our unity will ultimately determine our success. Whether OILA and Okaloosa Islanders have influence over what happens on our Island, or not, is up to us.

When I have seen neighbors, often OILA officers or directors, go to County Commission meetings to undermine their neighbor's interests and efforts, I realized it was dividing the Island rather than uniting us. Undermining your neighbors isn't convincing Commissioners of anything; it is giving the Commissioners political cover to do as they please. All Okaloosa Islanders lose when we are divided; the County can pit us against each other and do anything it wants to our Island. If you can't support your Island neighbor because it is the right thing to do, then do it because some day an issue will come up that directly affects you, and you will want the same courtesy.

Ditto regarding comments at OILA meetings that do more to create a toxic environment than to accomplish anything positive. Those comments stifle cooperation and productivity, keep people from coming back, and diminishing our numbers and our strength. We can do better. Nearly all OILA members already do better.

A house divided cannot stand.

**June 27, 2022 OILA Meeting** – This meeting will be to conduct the election of directors. That will be the only business conducted at the meeting. Eight candidates are running for four open seats.

The ballots will be counted in the Association Room at The Breakers condominium, 381 Santa Rosa Blvd. Any member who has not voted by mail is eligible to vote in-person between 6:30 PM and 7:00 PM in the Association Room. The polls will close at 7:00 PM and no ballots will be accepted after 7:00 PM.

The ballot counting will also be broadcast to the membership over Zoom. In a few days OILA members will receive a meeting invitation by e-mail, with instructions on how to register and join the meeting by Zoom.

The Zoom connection will stay open from 6:30 PM until the ballots are counted, the election results announced and we adjourn. Jim Simpson will issue an e-mail blast with the election results, and the results will be posted on the OILA website, oilaweb.com.

I wish OILA and the next board all the best.

David Sherry  
President, OILA

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## **OILA ELECTION MEETING AGENDA**

**DATE:** Monday, June 27, 2022

**TIME:** 6:30 PM CDT

**PLACE:** OILA members will have the option of attending the meeting in-person in the Association Room of The Breakers condominium on Okaloosa Island (381 Santa Rosa Blvd) or attending over the internet by Zoom. Ballot Counting and In-Person Voting for those who have not already submitted a ballot will be conducted at The Breakers Association Room. We need to maintain quiet in the ballot counting area. In-room attendees will not be able to hear Zoom attendees.

I. Call to Order 6:30 PM

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call of Board Members

IV. Members who have not already submitted a ballot may vote from 6:30 PM until 7:00 PM

V. Designated ballot counters assemble and start the election process

VI. Polls Close: 7:00 PM

VII. Votes tabulated

VIII. Election results announced

IX. Swearing in of new board members (may be deferred to the organizational meeting)

X. Adjournment

# LATEST UPDATE ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE “NEW” BROOKS BRIDGE

- by Jim Simpson

It is obvious that Okaloosa Island property owners have a direct interest in the construction of the new Brooks Bridge. Following is the latest information on this project.

On June 14 the Florida Department of Transportation announced the selection of Superior Construction Company Southeast as the contractor to build the new and larger bridge to replace the old Brooks Bridge. The contractor, based in Jacksonville, Florida, will be paid \$171 million in state funds to design and build the new bridge. Following are some key points about the contract.

- Construction start date is forecasted as being in the **Summer of 2023**.
- Construction time is expected to be about **5 years (1,810 days)** which would put project completion in **2028**.

## Specifics about the new bridge.

The new bridge will consist of two spans that will extend from the Perry Ave/US Highway 98 intersection downtown over Santa Rosa Sound and Santa Rosa Blvd to Pier Road on Okaloosa Island. Each span will have:

- Three 11-foot-wide driving lanes
- Two 10-foot-wide shoulders... and a
- 12-foot-wide shared use bicycle and pedestrian path (**see note 1**)

## Order of construction.

- Construction of the new bridge will start with the building of its first span north of the existing bridge.
- The existing bridge will remain intact while the first span of the new bridge is built next to it and over it.
- After it is finished, this span will have 4 functional temporary lanes while the old bridge is torn down and the second span is put in.

**Acquisition of Right-of-Way:** To date, the following properties have been removed: Four units at Oak Breeze Apartments located at 229 Florida Bianca Place, Pat’s Bait & Tackle store at 206 Brooks St., Giovanni’s One89 at 191 Brooks St and 6 road front units of Playground Inn located at 195 Brooks St. Probably following Playground Inn will be the Waffle House and the Tropical Waves beach store at 1251 Miracle Strip Parkway on Okaloosa Island, a downtown building at 246 Miracle Strip Parkway that formerly housed a Family First Life Office and a downtown structure at 234 E. Miracle Strip that formerly housed Bamboo’s Jamaican Restaurant and Diva Nails and Spa. Other properties acquired for right-of-way but need to be cleared include a downtown parcel at 225 Miracle Strip Parkway S.E that contains Props Brewery & Grill and an island parcel that contains Emerald Coast Inn & Suites.

**Note 1:** Okaloosa County has been approved for \$ 2 Million in state funding for the Bridge-to-Bridge Multi-Use Path. On Thursday, June 2, 2022, Governor Ron DeSantis signed the roughly \$112 billion State Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget, confirming the funding for projects totaling nearly \$8 Million to benefit Okaloosa County. \$2 million of this funding was allocated for constructing the US 98 Bridge-to-Bridge Multi-Use Path from West Okaloosa Island to Destin.