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The island-friendly staff at city hall is always ready to help newcomers, visitors and residents.

New in town?

If you're realizing your dream and finally making Port Aransas your permanent home, here are a few tips to help you get settled.

Once you've secured your living quarters — through the South Jetty real estate or classified ads, of course! — it's time to set up housekeeping.

Here is the low-down in getting set up with electricity and/or natural gas, water and sewer, garbage collection and telephone services.

Port Aransas gets its water through the Nueces County Water Control and Improvement District No. 4 (NCWCID #4). The office is on Ninth Street, which is east of Alister Street between Avenue C and Avenue G. The phone number is (361) 749-5201.

Just go by, or give them a call, and tell them where you are, and they'll give you the particulars about the amount of deposit that will be required and the monthly billing procedures.

Sewer service is also handled by NCWCID #4 on the same bill with your water.

When you sign up for water service, you are automatically put on the list for city sanitation service.

As far as electrical service, you may call the provider of your choice.

The City of Port Aransas contracts with a private garbage collection service, Allied Waste, for residential garbage collection. Residents may choose either 65-gallon or 95-gallon totes, provided by Allied. Call city hall to determine the collection

days for your neighborhood.

The city also participates in a residential recycling program. Plastic, aluminum, tin cans, cardboard boxes and newspapers (no glass) are picked up on Mondays. Allied Waste provides a blue recycling bin in which to place your recyclables and has a brochure that explains what is acceptable and how it needs to be prepared. Go by city hall, 710 W. Ave. A, to pick up a recycling bin.

Condominium residents may recycle plastic, aluminium, tin, paper and cardboard by taking them to the residential collection station at the end of Ross Avenue everyday from 8 a.m. to noon and 1 - 5 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday.

Brush pick-up is provided by the city if limbs are properly cut and bundled. Just call city hall at 749-4111 to inquire about proper bundling and request pick up. A slight fee will be charged. Regular customers may use the city's solid waste disposal site free of charge twice a month by presenting a city garbage collection receipt.

Residents who wish to use natural gas in their homes must go to city hall to make arrangements. The city purchased the natural gas company in the fall of 1996 and is now the natural gas provider for residents.

Local telephone service is provided by CenturyTel. The business office is in Louisiana, and the regional office is in San Marcos (Texas). Installation and repairs are routed through the local office on Avenue C between Alister and Station streets.

To order new residential service, call toll free 1-800-201-

4099. To order new business service, call 1-800-201-4102. Check listings in the phone book for other telephone or Internet services.

Port Aransas also offers a full-curriculum school district. Instruction begins at pre-kindergarten for children who are age 4 by Sept. 1 of each year and continues through grade 12. The district is classified as a 1A school.

The school administration office can be reached at 749-1200 for information about enrolling.

Emergency medical care is available through the city-operated Emergency Medical Service by dialing 911.

Port Aransas is served by a city police department (749-6241 for non-emergency calls) and a volunteer fire department. Both departments can be reached in an emergency by dialing 911.

The city's fire department is staffed by 22 volunteers and equipped with eight trucks. The fire station is located on Avenue C, between Ninth and 10th streets.

Port Aransas is also served by a weekly newspaper, the South Jetty. It is locally owned and operated. The South Jetty is a member of regional, state and national press associations. Published each Thursday, the South Jetty covers news of Port Aransas and Mustang Island and is available by mail with a paid subscription, or from newsstands throughout town.

Online subscriptions are available by going to www.portasouthjetty.com