



**Town of Beaufort, NC**

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**Board of Commissioners Work Session  
4:00 PM Monday, June 23, 2025  
Train Depot, 614 Broad Street**

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**Call To Order**

Mayor Harker called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

**Roll Call**

Elizabeth Lewis, Town Clerk, called the roll:

**PRESENT:**

Mayor Harker  
Mayor Pro Tem Cooper  
Commissioner LoPiccolo  
Commissioner Gillikin  
Commissioner Oliver  
Commissioner Spiegler (joined remotely, but did not participate in any voting)

**ABSENT:** None

**Agenda Approval**

Mayor Harker requested to pull item one from the discussion and consideration section, specifically The Periwinkle Event Application. With that, she asked for a motion to approve the agenda as requested.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to approve the agenda as amended.

The motion passed with a (4-0) vote.

**Presentations**

1. Sunny Day Flooding Research Project Update - Dr. Miyuki Hino & Dr. Katharine Anarde  
Dr. Hino and Dr. Anarde presented an update on their Sunny Day Flooding Research Project, which began about five years ago. They explained that the project has expanded since its inception and focused on sharing what they've learned in the past year from their sensor cohort. The presentation included a plot showing predictions of high tide flood events per year for Beaufort, ranging from best-case to worst-case scenarios. Dr. Hino noted that while these predictions are useful for comparing flooding across the nation, they don't accurately represent local flood risk. Dr. Anarde discussed the performance of the backflow preventer installed in spring 2023. The researchers concluded by mentioning that in the first year after installation, the backflow preventer helped to avoid up to 54 flood

events in Beaufort. They also noted that while the device is effective against water from the bay, it cannot prevent flooding from rainfall.

A full copy of the presentation is included in the meeting packet for reference.

The Board discussed the presentation and asked questions related to maintenance of the backflow preventer. The cost of the backflow preventer project was discussed with staff noting that the entire project, including installation, cost about \$17,000, with the device itself costing \$10,000.

Staff reported that there are currently three installed, with three more planned as part of USDA projects, bringing the total to six.

The conversation touched on other factors contributing to flooding, including groundwater levels, rain, and wind. The Board expressed interest in understanding the broader impacts of flooding, including on the sewer system.

Mayor Harker thanked the researchers for their presentation and continued work in monitoring flooding in Beaufort.

2. Duke Engage Students- Gianna Rodriguez & Connor Ennis

Gianna Rodriguez and Connor Ennis, students participating in the Duke Engage Program, presented findings from their work with the Town of Beaufort since May 14, 2025. Their project focused on public space usage and the potential for third spaces in the community, specifically in the west parking lot. The students discussed their analysis of community feedback, including physical community cards and an online survey conducted by the Waterfront Operations Committee. They presented data on the demographics of survey respondents.

Rodriguez and Ennis also shared their observations from site visits, detailing the number of people they observed, and the age ranges represented. They emphasized the potential for the area to be used as a third space, such as an extension of John Newton Park or a new park entirely. The students highlighted the benefits of creating a passive park in the area, including lower annual operating costs compared to more active parks like Randolph Johnson Park with its splash pad. They also noted the economic and social impacts of such a space, including potential resistance from businesses and the need for careful planning.

Mayor Harker thanked the students for their presentation and the valuable insights they provided from their summer project.

### **Items for Discussion and Consideration**

1. The Periwinkle Event Application- Pride Parade

This item was pulled from the agenda at the beginning of the meeting.

2. Beaufort Waterfront Operations and Finance Committee

Town Manager, Matt Zapp, presented an update on the fuel farm installation project. He explained that they had been tasked with determining the status and options for funding and installation of the fuel farm. He shared the Town had preliminary conversations with local lenders to determine fund availability and potential interest rates. He discussed the potential of a 60-month investment at an estimated interest rate just under 5%.

Zapp shared the Local Government Commission (LGC) indicated that whether they chose a private-public partnership or any other mechanism, it would still trigger all the steps necessary for LGC approval. He noted staff had drafted and distributed a Request for Proposal (RFP) for local lenders, with responses due by June 30, 2025; to be considered for the LGC's August agenda, the Town needs to apply and set an appointment by July 1, 2025.

Zapp requested authorization for staff to apply to the LGC for traditional funding. He also explained that they would need to come back to the Board on July 14, 2025, with two pieces of legislation: consideration of a design-build contract with Oaks Grading and an inducement resolution to allow for reimbursement of costs.

Commissioner Cooper shared he was supportive of a loan option rather than using fund balance to purchase the fuel tanks.

Commissioner Spiegler agreed she was in favor of the loan.

Commissioner Oliver encouraged the group to allow the Town Manager the opportunity to explore any alternative options he might run into and to determine where the source of loan repayment would come from, suggesting the revenue source from the dock enterprise fund should be used.

Commissioner Gillikin suggested the Board stay the course and continue forward with LGC approval and a potential loan for the fuel tanks.

Commissioner LoPiccolo questioned additional costs for infrastructure, such as sidewalks and turnouts for tankers. He also expressed concerns about the total cost of the project, with estimates ranging from \$900,000 to \$1.2 million. He noted the possibilities of potential delays related to permitting and construction.

Zapp provided clarification on the timeline for ordering the fuel tank, noting that the lead time has increased to 30 weeks. He shared per the Beaufort Waterfront Operations and Finance (BOWF) Committee, the goal was to have the tanks in the ground by April 1, 2026.

Town Attorney, Arey Grady, explained the financing process in greater detail. He also shared what would be included in a typical design build contract.

Commissioner LoPiccolo confirmed the Town did not have core sampling and suggested that it be done immediately.

Commissioner Oliver asked if the samples should be taken before the tank is ordered.

Zapp shared the Town was actively working to have the geotechnical testing samples taken in the desired location of the fuel tanks in the west parking lot. He also shared positive news related to the CAMA permit process.

Commissioner Gillikin shared it would be an advantage to have above ground tanks as a backup plan and those options could be incorporated in the permit process. She was positive in her comments of moving forward with the recommendations from the BWOFF Committee.

Mayor Harker recommended keeping the plan in the forefront to ensure the Town is able to successfully own their own fuel tanks.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to authorize staff to apply to the LGC for permission to seek a loan for funding of the fuel farm project.

The motion carried unanimously with a (4-0) vote.

### 3. Godette Hotel Update- 400 Pollock Street

Grady provided an update on the Godette Hotel situation at 400 Pollock Street. He summarized the recent correspondence with the property owner and the status of negotiations regarding the encroachment agreement for the deck overhang. He touched on several key points and emphasized the need for a timeline and milestones for the property rehabilitation as part of any encroachment agreement. He shared the property owner responded that they prefer to finalize the encroachment agreement independently before moving forward with design plans. He also shared that he had been in conversation with Preservation to determine the next steps forward.

The Board asked questions related to the property and determined the building remains condemned, with a demolition ordinance that was lifted in 2021, due to Preservation North Carolina's intervention. The group expressed concerns about the lack of progress on the building's rehabilitation. They also noted the potential safety hazards posed by the current state of the building.

Grady shared legal options available to the Town, including potential enforcement of the demolition order.

The Board noted the importance and need for clear communication with the property owner and a definitive timeline for action.

Commissioner Gillikin made a motion for the Town Attorney to proceed with drafting an encroachment agreement with definitive deadlines for each step of the process.

The motion carried unanimously with a (4-0) vote.

#### 4. Ordinance Review- Chapter 113. Itinerant Merchants

Zapp presented issues with the current ordinance on itinerant merchants, noting inconsistencies that make it difficult to enforce. Key points of the discussion included:

- The current ordinance excludes food trucks on any portion of town property, including paid and free parking spaces.
- Recent incidents involving food trucks and pushcart vendors operating in public spaces have highlighted the need for clarification.
- The ordinance is outdated and does not align with current practices in the community.
- Staff proposed bringing forward a draft on July 14 that would clean up the existing ordinance and address enforcement issues.

The Board discussed various aspects of the ordinance and potential revisions. They noted the need to balance support for local businesses with fair and equitable regulations for food trucks and other itinerant merchants. They expressed concerns about allowing vendors to purchase parking spaces, particularly along Front Street. Discussion also focused around the possibility of creating a permitting process for food trucks, potentially involving the Planning Board.

The Board reached a consensus to have staff prepare a short-term solution to be presented on July 14th at the Regular Meeting.

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to authorize staff to prepare a short-term revision of the Itinerant Merchants Ordinance for presentation on July 14, as well as to begin work on a long-term comprehensive revision to address food trucks and other merchants.

The motion carried unanimously with a (4-0) vote.

### **Staff Comments**

Town Manager Zapp presented three additional items for discussion:

#### **Broad Street Pavement Patching**

Zapp explained the current situation with the USDA projects (water, sewer, and stormwater) running behind schedule and the impact on road repairs. He shared the contract requires all town streets to be patched within 30 days of cutting, and all DOT streets within 15 days, but the roads have been open since September 2024. He noted that more than 50% of Broad Street is now torn up, which allows for full paving rather than patching. The decision to patch or pave is complicated by ongoing underground work and potential conflicts. He asked the Board to consider the options to patch now and potentially have to re-dig soon after or wait 90-120 days to pave the entire road when all work is complete.

The Board discussed the options and came to a consensus that waiting to do a full paving would be more cost-effective and less disruptive in the long run, despite potential public criticism about the extended timeline.

### **USDA Waterline Project Status and Costs**

Zapp provided an update on the USDA waterline project, highlighting significant cost overruns and delays. He shared the original engineer's estimate was \$6 million, but the lowest bid came in at \$6.9 million. The current contractor, Sunland, has completed only 15% of the work and is significantly behind schedule. The Town is considering shifting the work to the second bidder, TA Loving, whose original bid was \$14.8 million. This change would result in a funding shortfall of approximately \$5 million to complete the project as designed.

The Board discussed several options for addressing the shortfall, and asked questions about performance bonds, exploring additional funding options with USDA and potentially reducing the scope of the project. They agreed it would be best to have staff provide a more detailed update at the July 14 Regular Meeting.

### **Live Oak Trees on Front Street**

Zapp presented an issue regarding four live oak trees located on Front Street near properties 123, 125, and 127. He shared several key points related to the issue, noting that at least three of the four trees are in violation of the Town's current ordinance. He explained that two property owners have complained about the trees and impact on their properties. He noted the trees were planted between 2017 and 2019, after the current ordinance was in place. He asked for directions from the Board on removing them and relocating to another area and noted the need to enforce the ordinance consistently.

The Board discussed the cost and feasibility of relocating mature trees and the importance of maintaining the Town's tree canopy and historical character. They instructed staff to reach out to all affected property owners, especially those who planted two of the trees in violation, to discuss potential solutions before taking any action.

### **Adjourn**

Commissioner Cooper made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 PM. The motion carried unanimously with a (4-0) vote.

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Sharon E. Harker, Mayor

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Elizabeth Lewis, Town Clerk