



Town of Beaufort, NC

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Beaufort Waterfront Operations & Finance Committee
1:00 PM Thursday, October 16, 2025
Train Depot, 614 Broad Street

Call To Order

Meeting was called to order by Chair Sarah Spiegler at 1:53 p.m.

The BWOFC committee gathered at 1 p.m. in the Beaufort Train Depot for a celebration lunch provided by the Town for all of their hard work.

Roll Call

Special Guest: Senator Norm Sanderson

BWOFC Members Present: Chair Sarah Spiegler, Vice Chair Paula Gillikin, Miriam Sutton, Craig Souza, Mike Bradley, Weymouth Tillett, Barry Slade, Vic Fasolino, Dexter Matthews, Becky Newton Bowler, Steve Bishop, and Ted Morris

Staff Present: Public Information Officer & Clerk to BWOFC Rachel Johnson, Town Manager Matt Zapp, Assistant Town Manager Elizabeth Lewis, Finance Director Christi Wood

Mayor Sharon Harker was present.

Commissioners Present: Melvin Cooper, Bucky Oliver

Former Interim Town Manager Charlie Burgess was also present for the meeting.

Agenda Approval

Agenda was approved with the change of moving the Beaufort Town Docks Logo to the first item after the Welcome to Special Guest.

Minutes Approval

1. September 2025 Minutes – Approved as presented.

Presentations

Chair Spiegler introduced and welcomed Senator Norm Sanderson.

Sanderson thanked everyone and said that he had recently spoken with the mayor about all of the hard work the BWOFC had done over the past year. He said it is a transparent model that many Towns could benefit from following. He thanked everyone for everything they had done for the citizens of Beaufort and for stepping up to the plate, being willing to serve, and making it as public as possible.

Mayor Harker said it was a team effort and highlighted that there is a lot of expertise around the table.

Dexter Matthews thanked Sanderson for his support of the state and local economy and for always opening the door for him when he was in Raleigh.

Sanderson said he hasn't given up and thinks that the Senate can work together to lower tax rates and more. He discussed some of the issues being faced in Raleigh with passing a budget. He said the region keeps getting bigger and that it is a melting pot with many people who bring a variety of gifts and talents.

BWOF Committee Considerations

1. Beaufort Town Docks Logo

Paula Gillikin led the discussion on the logo. She explained where the logo came from and that it looked like a boat hull. There were several concepts considered, including adding nautical themes, an anchor, and more. She presented three logos for the committee to review and compare. The logos presented included elements from all of the BWOF's recommendations from their last meeting.

There was discussion about using the Town logo, anchors etc. Consideration was given to the ease of reproduction for embroidery on shirts. Preference was given to using more nautical colors such as navy blue. F3's preference is to have a black and white and a color version.

Discussion centered around including NC to distinguish Beaufort, NC, from Beaufort, SC. The logo will be used on signage, uniforms, digital marketing, etc.

It was decided that the BWOF would select one they like and ask the BOC to approve it.

Items for Discussion & Consideration

Project Updates

1. Marina Management

a. Transition of Management Companies

The transition is scheduled to officially begin Nov. 1, 2025. Town Manager Matt Zapp reported that the dredging of bulkhead channel is complete and that he has been working daily with Mr. Weeks. Some of the concerns that have been brought up are the shower facilities needing upgrades to become ADA compliant and to be cleaned up. Zapp reported that staff is working to get a renovation underway. There are some sewer issues that need to be addressed and a plumber has been contacted. He said his team is working closely with F3.

b. Review Proposed Budget

Zapp presented a draft of a proposed operating budget for the Town Docks. He said it is based off the current town budget structure and that anything can be changed. This is version one and it is based off of assuming 30% occupancy on transient boaters. He explained the intent of the commercial leases.

Spiegler stated that the Board of Commissioners discussed commercial operators and how we should calculate their leases going forward. The BOC was split between wanting to increase to the market rate and on leaving current rates in place for a year and slowly adjusting rent until market rate is achieved. There was no clear consensus and the staff was asked to provide data on how this would impact the operators. The question also came up of do we increase rent with the town's fiscal year that starts in July or with the traditional calendar year of January. This information is anticipated to come back to the BOC at their Nov. 10, 2025 meeting.

Gillikin said that several commissioners didn't want to make it a fast transition and wanted to reach out directly to the operators. Spiegler said we want to do what is best for Beaufort.

Matthews suggested staggering the rate increases. Barry Slade said the goal is fair market value and F3 recommends working with the operators to give them time to achieve fair market value.

There are a total of 5 operators and 10 boat slips that will be impacted. Zapp said F3 is running a budget from Jan. 1 - July 1 using existing rates and hasn't projected out beyond that based on a 30% occupancy rate. The occupancy rate was acknowledged as being low, but intentionally low due to the fact there are so many unknowns.

2. Fuel Farm

Zapp said the Fuel Farm is the biggest piece of the puzzle. The tank is ordered. Zapp said we are being transparent and making swift moves to make sure deadlines are met. None of us can foresee Jan. 1-April, the fuel tanks are a major project and simultaneously we have the USDA project with a prolonged closure on Turner Street. There are a lot of pieces to this and staff is answering questions as fast as we can, but the questions are preceding the answers. The Fuel Farm is scheduled to start the first full week of January. Permitting is going swiftly. There will not be fuel at the docks from January-April. Jim Davis will bring a fuel truck any time it is needed.

Insurance is a major cost. The current operation is self insured. The question is do you want to protect the current infrastructure; we don't know the replacement cost. The current numbers in the draft budget are placeholders. The deductible is a moving target. Zapp said he is finding lower rates by using local companies.

Dexter Matthews had questions about the Town's Capital Improvement Plan and the docks. Sarah Spiegler stated that the current approved CIP needs work but that it is a work in progress.

The draft budget will need refinement at the end of 6 months once better data becomes available.

Barry Slade asked how it was possible for electricity to the docks to be showing a loss. Zapp explained that currently there are 5 annual vendors who are not paying a metered bill. He said the Town doesn't yet have a full picture but that the Town is working with Duke Energy to get a better perspective and more information.

The current quoted winter rate is \$300 a month plus \$1.50 per foot of the vessel plus electric.

3. Legislative Appropriations

Matthews provided an update that there is currently nothing to report as the State has yet to approve a budget.

4. Duke Engage - Third Spaces

Spiegler updated the committee that the Duke Engage students are continuing to explore 3rd spaces with a focus on John Newton Park and the West parking lot. The students will be conducting surveys throughout the next few months. They plan to present their findings at the December BWOFC meeting.

Next Steps/Wrap up

Discussion centered around the frequency of meetings for the BWOFC and the process. Paula Gillkin said that the role of the committee going forward wasn't something that could be defined at the inception. The committee has been running and it is time to pass the baton. "We are now at a point to take a breath," she said. Mayor Harker stated it is time to transition. F3 will be handling marina operations and will function similar to a Town department head. Communications to F3 should be brought to the BWOFC committee chairs then to the Town Manager. The Town Manager is the primary point of contact.

Meeting frequency in 2026 was mentioned as being on an as needed basis with a potential reconfiguration of the committee to move forward with less members. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 20, 2025 at 1 p.m.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:46 p.m.

Chair

Board Secretary