



## Town of Beaufort, NC

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### Beaufort Waterfront Operations & Finance Committee Meeting 1:00 PM Thursday, March 6, 2025 Train Depot, 614 Broad Street

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#### Call To Order

Chair Sarah Spiegler called the meeting to order at 1 p.m.

#### Roll Call

**Members Present:** Chair Sarah Spiegler, Ted Morris, Mike Bradley, Vic Fasolino, Barry Slade, Dexter Matthews, Miriam Sutton, Steve Bishop and Weymouth Tillett

Vice-Chair Paula Gillikin and Craig Souza joined via Zoom

Becky Newton Bowler joined the meeting as it was in progress.

**Staff Present:** Interim Town Manager Charlie Burgess, Public Information Officer Rachel Johnson, Town Engineer Sam Bell and Finance Director Christi Wood.

**Mayor & BOC Present:** Mayor Sharon Harker

#### Agenda Approval

Agenda approved by consensus.

#### Minutes Approval

1. No minutes were submitted for approval. Staff member Rachel Johnson stated both the Feb. 13 and the March 6 meeting minutes would be available by the March 20, 2025 meeting.

#### Project Updates

**Fuel Farm Update:** Interim Town Manager Charlie Burgess said they are currently working on the design aspect and that there have been a few hiccups with the size of the distribution line. The current line is 2-inches and goes on the bulkhead. A 3-inch one must go under the boardwalk. The 2-inch line is a low-flow line. He said the Town is doing its due diligence to see if they can reuse the existing 2-inch line or if it must be replaced and upgraded at this time to include a double wall.

**Marina Management RFPs Update:** Burgess said the RFPs were due Feb. 28 and that he had received 4 submissions from Explore US, F3 Marina, Kristen & Lee Sykes, Latitude Marinas.

Sarah Spiegler asked the committee to select 3 members for the mayor to appoint to serve on the review team along with Town staff members Finance Director Christi Wood, Assistant Town Manager Elizabeth Lewis and commissioners Sarah Spiegler and Paula Gillikin. Barry Slade, Steve Bishop and Weymouth Tillett were selected by consensus.

This is a big and really important choice said Mayor Harker.

Mike Bradley asked permission to conduct research for the review team. Vic Fasolino said it might be

useful to do research on the companies before the review meeting. Burgess said that is fine and that the review team would likely meet the first week of April. The plan is for the review team to interview all 4 companies.

**Community Conversation** – Discussion about when to host a public meeting to share the work that has been done so far and to garner additional input. The committee said they'd like to have the community meeting in April and suggested April 15. Rachel Johnson and Miriam Sutton are working together before the next meeting to finalize a date, location, and format. An update will be provided at the March 20 meeting.

## Research Topics

**Finance Update:** \$12 Million Appropriation Request – Dexter Matthews said that he has met in Raleigh and that Sanderson is drafting a local bill to introduce to the Senate about the appropriation request. Cairns will introduce it in some form in the House. Matthews said to remember that it is not guaranteed and that the Western part of the state is a big priority as they continue to recover from Hurricane Helene. Matthews recommends the Town continue going after grants.

**BRIC Grant Update:** Town Engineer Sam Bell updated that the Town as invited to submit a full application but that in follow-up talks with WK Dickson that there appears to be an opportunity that is more fitting. The BRIC application is due in 2 weeks and is for \$500,000 for design work. The other grant is the Hazard Mitigation Program through the state.

After much discussion, Sam was instructed by the committee to investigate the possibility applying for both grants while continuing to work with WK Dickson.

Charlie Burgess said the Town is positioning itself to procure professional grant services for grants.

**Construction Update:** Sarah Spiegler said that Vic Fasolino will give an update to the Board of Commissioners at their upcoming meeting on Monday regarding the Fuel Tanks.

**Operations Update:** Ted Morris said he had given a summary of economic and community impacts of the NPS at the last meeting. He said we do not have enough data sources to make decisions. There are creative ways to capture the data but we need to make decisions on what we seek to inform by the data collected in order to get a data plan. Data collection is needed in order to help make the best and most informed decisions for all commercial operators.

There was some discussion about the current request to the BOC to execute a 10-year lease with the concessionaire for the NPS. Interim Town Manager Charlie Burgess said that the contract was being negotiated by the Town's legal team and wording is being finessed to include Beaufort waterfront in order to provide for opportunities downtown or at Gallant's Channel. There was concern expressed about the price and the length of the lease. It was also brought up that there is more to consider than just the lease price as there is value to being the gateway to the Cape Lookout National Seashore. It was asked if the contract could include the requirement that the concessionaire report data to the Town.

Mike Bradley said there is an assumption that people going on the ferries and are not using the Town merchants. It was discussed that let's get the data to tell us what is going on. Burgess explained that the National Park Service requires a 10-year lease. There was more concern expressed about the 10 year length of the contract.

Weymouth Tillet said that according to the numbers provided, 54,000 people rode the vessels last year. That is bringing people to your sidewalk, they paid parking meters from which the money goes into the downtown. There is a lot of ferry business that occurs from foot traffic which tells me that there are a lot of people already in Town spending money.

Ted Morris said these are systems questions not either/or questions: Is this a positive? Where do the benefits accrue? As a community, this number of visitors is a systems question. Right now, we have no idea what the impact is.

Mayor Harker said the Board of Commissioners has heard the topic of the lease, they had concerns and wanted to see if the price was competitive. There will be additional information provided to the BOC during their next meeting on Monday.

The meeting adjourned by consensus at 3:03 p.m.

