



Town of Beaufort, NC

701 Front St. - P.O. Box 390 - Beaufort, N.C. 28516
252-728-2141 - 252-728-3982 fax - www.beaufortnc.org

Beaufort Waterfront Operations & Finance Committee
1:00 PM Thursday, November 20, 2025
Train Depot, 614 Broad Street

Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by Chair Sarah Spiegler.

Roll Call

Present: Chair Sarah Spiegler, Miriam Sutton, Craig Souza, Weymouth Tillett, Barry Slade, Dexter Matthews, Becky Newton Bowler

Members Absent: Vice Chair Paula Gillikin, Mike Bradley, Steve Bishop, Vic Fasolino,

Staff Present: Town Manager Matt Zapp, Assistant Town Manager Elizabeth Lewis, Community Engagement Director Jen Welborn

BOC Members Present (non-committee members): Bucky Oliver, Melvin Cooper

Attending Online: Mayor Sharon Harker and Lori Meehan with F3 Marina

Agenda Approval

The agenda was approved by consensus, with the addition of the approval of October 16, 2025, meeting minutes.

Welcome to F3

Chair Spiegler welcomed F3 Marina and Lori Meehan, noting that the committee would receive updates on the transition to F3 Marina as the new management operator. She thanked Ms. Meehan for her work to date and expressed appreciation and excitement for the partnership moving forward.

Items for Discussion and Consideration

The group reviewed progress on previously adopted Beaufort Waterfront Plan Recommendations. The group reported that Phase 1 implementation remains on track, including the establishment of the docks as an enterprise fund and the allocation of capital funds for replacement of the fuel tank. The committee also discussed the recent formation of a transition group to support F3 during the 60–90-day onboarding period, noting that Phase 2 will begin on January 1, 2026, followed by a year of data collection to evaluate revenues and expenditures.

Project Updates

Ms. Meehan provided an update on her recent site visit, which included fire safety compliance, slip holder outreach, and progress on marketing and reservation software. She noted that most current marina staff had applied with the new operator and reviewed recommended naming conventions, operational improvements, and preliminary pricing structures. The committee spent considerable time reviewing the draft 2026 fee schedule, which outlines transient boat rental rates, commercial operator fees, electrical charges, and proposed winter dockage fees for January through March 2026.

The group also reviewed a six-month marina budget. Ms. Meehan explained the regional market rate of \$16 per foot for slips, clarifying that the figure represents an average of comparable marinas in eastern North Carolina. Committee members questioned the methodology and discussed how best to transition the five existing commercial operators from their current annual rate.

Some of the group expressed concerns about increasing the rate immediately to \$16 per foot, and that a six-month transition was too brief. Majority of the members agreed that a phase-in was more appropriate and supported raising the rate to \$13.50 per foot on January 1, 2026, and to \$16.50 per foot on January 1, 2027, with new operators paying full market rate upon entry from January 1, 2026, and beyond.

Mr. Tillett suggested the approach aligns with market realities, increases annual revenue and provides fairness for all taxpayers. He made a motion to recommend a commercial fee of \$13.50 per foot beginning January 1, 2026, and an increase to \$16.50 per foot beginning January 1, 2027, with an understanding that new commercial operations would pay full market rate immediately.

The motion passed with a (6-1) vote. Ms. Bowler voted in opposition.

Ms. Meehan recommended a winter structure consisting of a \$525 base rate plus \$10.50 per foot for vessels over 50 feet, in addition to electrical charges. The group discussed winter dockage and agreed that rate seemed appropriate.

Mr. Slade made a motion to recommend winter dockage rates of \$10.50 per foot (monthly) with a minimum of 50 feet, plus electric, for January– March 2026.

The motion passed unanimously with a (7-0) vote.

The committee also discussed dredging needs for the marina and Bulkhead Channel in future budgets. Mr. Zapp suggested incorporating dredging funds for the commercial slips in the 2027 budget, as it was not an immediate need.

Mr. Zapp provided an update on the fuel farm installation project, reporting that permits have been secured and that the new tank is in production for delivery in January 2026. He also offered a brief update on grant opportunities, with Chair Spiegler noting the Town recently applied for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) Advance Assistance. If awarded, the grant would fund the design portion of the boardwalk and bulkhead replacement project.

Next Steps/Wrap Up

The next scheduled meeting of the committee was confirmed to be December 4, 2025, at 1:00 PM.

It was also confirmed that F3 will provide revised transient rate ranges, updated charts reflecting peak pricing, and regional comparisons for commercial rates. Town staff will update the draft fee schedule, prepare a memo to the Board of Commissioners summarizing rate recommendations for 2026 and 2027 and continue grant application work.

Adjourn

Chair Spiegler adjourned the meeting at 2:40 PM.

Chair

Minutes Prepared by: Elizabeth Lewis