



Town of Beaufort, NC

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Beaufort Waterfront Operations & Finance Committee Meeting
1:00 PM Thursday, January 9, 2025
Train Depot, 614 Broad Street

Call To Order

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

Roll Call

Members Present: Chair Sarah Spiegler, Steve Bishop, Mike Bradley, Vic Fasolino, Becky Newton Bowler, Barry Slade, Dexter Matthews, Miriam Sutton, and Weymouth Tillett

Members Absent: Vice-Chair Paula Gillikin, Ted Morris and Craig Souza

Staff Present: Interim Town Manager Charlie Burgess, Public Information Officer Rachel Johnson & Planning Director Kyle Garner

BOC Members Present: Commissioner Bucky Oliver & Commissioner Melvin Cooper were in attendance in the audience.

Agenda Approval

Agenda approved by consensus.

Minutes Approval

1. Dec. 5, 2024 Minutes

Minutes approved by consensus.

Items for Discussion and Consideration

1. Project Updates

Chair Spiegler thanked everyone for their hard work. Bowler took a moment to acknowledge the passing of Susan Sanders and the work she put into serving on the Harbor and Waterways Committee. Spiegler showed the January newsletter that featured a piece on the work of the BWOF committee and thanked Miriam Sutton for her work putting the information together.

1. Beaufort Waterfront Plan Implementation

Fuel Farm Update

Vic Fasolino and Steve Bishop gave an update on the status of the Fuel Farm process. The RFP deadline was in December. Two responses were received so the RFP had to be issued again. The RFP is active until Jan. 17, 2025. One of the big questions is where does the tank go. The price will be dependent on the location. The recommendation is to discuss this with the contractor, to bring that information to the committee in order for the committee to make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners for their consideration. It was suggested that the Town might want to invite the bidders to come in and evaluate the available locations. Interim Town Manager Charlie Burgess plans to have a selection committee meeting to review the RFP submissions after the 17th deadline. The selection committee is comprised of 2 members of the BWOFF committee, town staff and the Town Manager. Burgess said the main things that are needed are to know the size and location of the fuel tank and how many dispensers the Town will want to be installed.

Marina Management Update

Barry Slade offered an update on the Marina Management RFP. He had requested the Town extend the RFP deadline from January to Feb. 28. Town staff updated the RFP to reflect this request prior to the January 9 meeting. Slade said he had heard from a few people in the marina industry and that the January deadline created some possible issues due to the holiday season.

Discussion centered around the specifics of the RFP to include purposely not putting in a term and leaving that to contract negotiations. Burgess stated that he has received a few phone calls asking about the term. The committee came to a consensus to instruct Burgess to say 3-5 years with an option to renew.

There was also discussion about requiring a proforma as some potential applicants inquired about this requirement. Burgess stated that they can submit one even if they are not officially asked in the RFP. Slade stated that is something that can be managed in the second round of conversations. Spiegler stated that a selection committee like the selection committee for the Fuel Farm RFP would be formed.

2. Research Topics

Army Corps Line/Dredging

The Army Corps Line in Taylors Creek is a topic that the former Harbor & Waterways Committee discussed and is a topic that has come back up. Matthews stated the mayor asked the BWOFF committee to discuss the topic to see if there was anything additional to add.

The Corps' line was put in place years ago as dredging was needed for commerce. Over the years, during the building of docks, the line was not enforced. There are currently docks/slips all up and down Taylor's Creek that extend beyond the Corps' line including the Town docks.

The Town approached the Army Corps of Engineers and received a letter dated Jan. 24, 2024 that states because the Town docks have been there for 40 plus years, the Town can rebuild them. The letter grandfathered the Town docks.

The question for consideration is should the Town ask the Corps to consider moving the line to create more of a permanent fix not only for the Town docks but for all of the property owners along Taylor's Creek. Several citizens including Randy Mann and Charlie Harrell have been involved in researching the matter and provided input. Harrell stated that in his research and conversations with CAMA that they do not have an issue with it. Currently, if a structure receives 50% or more damage it is not permitted to rebuild. While the Town docks are exempt from this due to the letter, there are others who are not protected. Harrell stated he would like to go to the Federal Legislature and then to authenticate a new line for long-term protection. He said the first step is to move the pier headline then to take the steps to have a congressman introduce a bill.

BWOFF committee members wanted to know how this impacted docks destroyed in 2018 as a result of Hurricane Florence. It was stated that the Corps was not actively enforcing it at that time. By having it moved, it would eliminate future enforcement concerns.

Spiegler shared Commissioner Gillikin's concern about creating a potential situation that could take the Corps away and/or delay the Environmental Assessment and dredging work already underway by the Corps. The committee clarified a few items to include that if the line were to be moved shorter docks would not automatically be allowed to extend, that would be up to CAMA and based on the percent of footage of the lot as well as other factors associated with obtaining permitting from CAMA. It was also clarified that the new line is inside the channel line and that no one would ever be able to build into the channel. The setback line is from the channel.

Bowler said it seems prudent for the BWOFF Committee to send this to the BOC for consideration. The committee reached a consensus after excluding members who currently have docks from voting to recommend the BOC look into submitting a request to the Army Corps for consideration of extending the line.

Mooring Field Update

Fasolino asked where we stand with progress toward a mooring field

Planning Director Kyle Garner provided an update on dredging and the environmental assessment. He said the area is in a Federal Channel and that an Environmental Assessment (EA) must be performed in order to do the necessary dredging. The Corps has begun the EA. Once the EA is complete, the Corps will coordinate with the Town. There is a cost share of up to 75%. This group needs to be thinking about that because dredging is not cheap. Garner advised that if Town asks the Corps to change the lines, it may delay the EA.

Fasolino said his understanding is that this EA has been in the works since the Harbor committee.

Appropriations

Dexter Matthews shared a letter that Mayor Harker sent to Senator Norman Sanderson and Representative Celeste Cairns requesting consideration for an appropriation from the delegation. Matthews said he had traveled to Raleigh and met with Sanderson and that he was very supportive as well as stopped by Cairns office.

He said we will not know if it is approved until the budget is complete and that while the western part of the state still needs tons of money that our request was relatively small. Matthews will continue monitoring the request.

BRIC Proposal Update

Bowler reported that a draft Letter of Intent (LOI) was submitted on Dec. 20, 2024. The request is for \$500,000 to fund the Planning, Engineering and Design phase of the project. If the LOI is selected, a full proposal will be submitted in April.

Construction/Operations Update: None

Finance Update: Craig Souza will give an update on the newly formed Beaufort Community Foundation at the next meeting.

Next Steps: Spiegler said that Ted Morris is putting together a presentation focused on the economic and social impacts of operations like the ferry service.

The meeting adjourned by consensus at 2:32 p.m.

