

# CAROLINA BEACH

Town Council Workshop

Tuesday, June 24, 2025 - 9:00 AM

Council Chambers, 1121 N. Lake Park Boulevard, Carolina Beach, NC



## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Barbee called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

### PRESENT

Mayor Lynn Barbee

Mayor Pro Tem Deb LeCompte

Council Member Jay Healy

Council Member Joe Benson

Council Member Mike Hoffer

### ALSO PRESENT

Town Manager Bruce Oakley

Assistant Town Manager Ed Parvin

Finance Director Debbie Hall

Town Clerk Kim Ward

### DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Marketing Advisory Committee Budget Presentation

Jeff Hogan, Chairman of the Marketing Advisory Committee (MAC), presented the fiscal year 2025/2026 marketing budget. The total budget is \$1,345,675, which is a \$78,473 decrease from the fiscal year 2024/2025 budget. Rollover funds for emergency use are \$854,000.

Mr. Hogan said some of the changes include increasing public relations and social media and investing more into research platforms. He introduced Megan Buchbinder, the new Executive Vice President of Marketing and Strategy for Wilmington and Beaches Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB).

Council Member Hoffer said State legislative change to the formula for how the Town spends room occupancy tax (ROT) funds is needed. He noted the large amount of rollover funds.

Mr. Hogan said about 3 years ago, the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) informed the Town and the CVB they are not a savings account and capped the amount of rollover funds. He said this still goes up a little every year, but the idea is that there is enough money in there and the purpose of ROT is to spend it. He said things are obviously working because more revenue comes in every year, and although he would like to see that money used for sand on the beach, they must keep people coming to keep collecting, so coming up with fresh new ads to spend the money is important.

Mayor Barbee questioned where a debate would go if the process was started in Raleigh for getting the ability to use ROT funds differently.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said it would take all 4 municipalities and the County to agree to take it to legislation to change it.

Council Member Healy said this could be an example of “be careful what you wish for” because things could change but not for the better.

Mayor Barbee said it’s wildly different how counties spend their ROT funds.

Council Member Hoffer asked how the rollover funds are managed. He said he hopes it’s not sitting there at 0.1% interest. Mr. Hogan said it’s probably getting 0% interest if he had to bet. Mayor Barbee said the County manages that, and he doesn’t know what they do with reserve funds.

**ACTION:** Motion to approve the FY2025/2026 Marketing Budget in the amount of \$1,345,675.

Motion made by Mayor Barbee

Voting Yea: Mayor Barbee, Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte, Council Member Healy, Council Member Benson, Council Member Hoffer

*Motion passed unanimously*

## 2. Review of Town Committees

During the 2025 budget retreat, Council discussed Town committees and considered the option of converting them into ad hoc status or merging them with non-profit groups that share similar goals. Council Members met with committees and asked to revisit the matter as a group at a workshop. At the April workshop, Council Members reported the discussions they had with their committees and asked staff to bring back recommendations for moving forward.

Mr. Parvin gave background information.

Goals of 2021 policy and ordinance

- Improve productivity and transparency of committees by laying out clear expectations and reporting requirements
- Enhance Council’s ability to manage committees by streamlining ordinances and policies for creating and modifying committees

2025

How do we ensure committees are working toward tasks consistent with:

- Council vision
- Direction given to Town Manager/staff through the budget process

Options

- Combining committees with similar functions

- Dissolving standing committees that historically are not receiving tasking
- Change status of committees from standing to ad hoc so they can be utilized when tasking is given from Council
- Transition to non-profit when committees are working to conduct projects outside of the Town's budget

Standing committees appointed by Council (not required by State law)

- Operations Advisory
- Police Advocacy
- Bike/Pedestrian
- Parks and Recreation
- Beautification

Mayor Barbee said the issue is not the committees but Council giving direction to them. He said the goal is to button up things and make sure Council is following the ordinance to assign them tasks. He suggested moving them to ad hoc status, and when a meeting is necessary then the committee's Council liaison would give Council an update and get consensus.

Mayor Barbee asked about the required time frame for advertising committee meetings. Ms. Ward said it should be at least 48 hours, but a week is preferable.

Council Member Hoffer said there are months when committees have skipped meetings. Mayor Barbee said the key change would be that the default would be that a committee is not meeting unless it's needed, and that would be determined by whether there is a directive and consensus of Council.

Council Member Hoffer said in comparison with other beach towns in the State, the Town's number of committees is above average. He said he would like to see some of them ended or condensed so there are no more than 4, one for each Council Member, so future elected officials don't experience burnout. Council Member Hoffer said he thinks Bike/Ped should merge with Parks and Rec, and Operations should sunset.

Mayor Barbee said the only standing committees the Town should have are those legally mandated: Board of Adjustment, Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Marketing Advisory Committee (MAC).

Council Member Hoffer said Board of Adjustment and Planning and Zoning are managed by Community Development Director Jeremy Hardison, but MAC does have a Council liaison, currently Council Member Healy.

Council Member Healy said he is amazed at how valuable it was for some committees to become a 501(c)(3) organization, which allows them to raise money and have access to it instantly. Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said moving the Centennial Committee under the Pleasure Island Chamber of Commerce has worked very well.

Council Member Hoffer said people are appointed because Council wants their feedback, and anyone can form a non-profit so that doesn't necessarily give any weight of authority.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said Bike/Ped and Beautification are the only committees with direction.

Mayor Barbee said he thinks combining Parks and Rec with Beautification makes more sense than combining Parks and Rec with Bike/Ped. He suggested having all current committees meet as directed to see where things go, and if a committee doesn't get any direction for a year then that one could be disbanded. Mayor Barbee said he is agreeable to combining committees but wants to be sure Council is directing the activities. He mentioned how asking staff members to attend committee meetings can be taxing on them and asked if it would be helpful to request a staff presence only when necessary as opposed to assigning a staff member to be at every meeting. Mr. Parvin said yes, this is a good idea.

Mayor Barbee said every committee would need to meet in July to elect officers. Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said at that time, they can also put together a calendar for the year.

Council Member Healy asked if the committees move to an ad hoc status whether members should still have the benefit of getting a free parking pass. Council Member Hoffer and Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said that doesn't have to change. Mayor Barbee said he is more than happy to continue giving committee members a parking pass if they are willing to commit their time.

Council Member Hoffer said he still thinks it's time to let the Operations Advisory Committee go. He suggested leaving the other committees as standing but slow them down because to him, ad hoc means there is a specific beginning and end.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said the Police Advocacy Committee serves as citizen volunteers for the Police Department. She said if Operations goes away, there will be 4 committees for 4 Council Members.

Council Member Hoffer said citizens feel more comfortable coming to talk about things at committee meetings rather than Council meetings. He said Parks and Rec should exist because almost every municipality has this type of committee.

Council Member Benson said he is fine ending the Operations Advisory Committee. He said the Police Advocacy Committee has set annual events to work on every year, but he is not sure about the other committees, although he thinks some decisions need to be made now.

Council Member Hoffer said if Operations goes away, Council Member Benson would no longer serve as a liaison to any committees. Council Member Hoffer suggested passing one of his committees, Bike/Ped, to Council Member Benson.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said she likes the idea of a first meeting in July followed by a set schedule of quarterly meetings. Council Member Hoffer said he prefers a bimonthly schedule. Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said after July, committees can call meetings as needed.

Council Member Hoffer said these would not be ad hoc committees, so they should stop using that term. He said they would be standing committees but meet as needed or at the pleasure of the Council liaison.

Mayor Barbee said he likes the idea of keeping 4 committees, and staff would not attend unless invited by Council following the request of the Council liaison to that committee.

**ACTION:** Motion to sunset the Operations Advisory Committee

Motion made by Council Member Benson

Voting Yea: Mayor Barbee, Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte, Council Member Healy, Council Member Benson, Council Member Hoffer

*Motion passed unanimously*

This would be effective July 1.

Mayor Barbee said the other 4 committees will move to one standing meeting per year in which they will elect a Chair and Vice Chair, and as for any other meetings and staff resources the Council liaison would bring that request to Council during a workshop.

Cindy Dunn, Chair of the Beautification Committee, requested to speak. She asked how these changes will affect the operation of the committee because they work on projects in addition to making recommendations. Ms. Dunn said committees will need direction for how to move forward.

Mayor Barbee said this is not really a change but just buttoning up to make sure Council is giving the direction. He said this should only affect official meetings, not project work.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said she thinks they should leave the 4 remaining committees and see how things go.

Mayor Barbee said Council would do an annual review of standing committees in January to see if each one is still needed.

Council Member Hoffer suggested that staff update the policy with some points of this discussion, and at a future meeting the policy can be adopted.

Mayor Barbee said it's important to capture the intent of what they are trying to accomplish today.

Council Member Healy suggested that it could be helpful in the future to have 2 committees meet together because having more people in the room can lead to more helpful discussion.

Council Member Hoffer said it's up to Council to coordinate that and doesn't have to be part of a specific policy.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Council Member Hoffer said he wants the Town to start an ad hoc committee for Freeman Park. He said this was discussed at the budget retreat and recalls that there was 100% consensus that a land management plan is needed for the 300 acres of natural area west of the dunes. Council Member Hoffer said this would give a basis for the Town to move forward, and he thinks Parks & Recreation Director Eric Jelinski or his designee in that department should serve as the Chair.

Mr. Parvin said the N.C. Land and Water Fund, which has deed restrictions on the property, has criteria they want a Freeman Park committee to meet: 9 members, including 2 citizens at large with expertise in coastal issues, a Town staff member, a Council Member, someone from the Division of Coastal Management, someone from the N.C. Coastal Federation, a coastal ecologist, a biologist, and someone from the National Heritage Program. He said there is likely room for flexibility, but that is the type of representation they would like to see.

Mayor Barbee said staff and Council Member Hoffer should coordinate to put a list of roles together to make sure the N.C. Land and Water Fund approves of the committee makeup.

Council Member Hoffer said while it's preferable that the committee members are Town citizens, the expertise may need to come from elsewhere.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said the committee is necessary for the Town to preserve and be stewards of the land, which has historic value.

Council Member Hoffer said they will put something together to vote on at the July regular meeting.

Council Member Benson asked about flushing of stormwater lines related to the Potential Tropical Cyclone 8 project. Mr. Parvin said he can find out more.

Council Member Benson said he wants to see the speed limit on Ocean Boulevard reduced to 25 mph.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said she is hearing complaints about people blocking the sidewalk on Ocean Boulevard. Mr. Parvin said the Police Department has been going out to educate people parked there.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said Boardwalk business owners will be bringing a presentation to the July regular meeting about a social district on the Boardwalk.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte asked if staff can put together a cost analysis for milling down and paving Canal Drive.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte said the Rainbow Bridge project is coming together well, with staff already putting up signs and plaque installation beginning next week.

Mayor Barbee said there have been a lot of complaints about goose manure around the Lake. He said staff and Council put together the best program possible and it was generally working, but complaints are coming in again and there is no way to power wash the sidewalks enough to keep them clean for any significant period. Mr. Parvin said staff power washed on a Friday evening, and by the Saturday

morning market there were complaints. Council Member Hoffer said power washing doesn't get to the root cause of the problem.

Mayor Pro Tem LeCompte asked why the grass along the outer edge of the Lake is not being allowed to grow, acting as a natural deterrent for geese being there. She said landscapers are continuing to cut the grass all the way down to right up next to the water. Mayor Barbee said they need to confirm this is an effective strategy and if so, make sure mowing there stops.

Council Member Healy said Goose Masters asked the Town to develop an educational program for the public. Mr. Parvin said Goose Masters wanted to ensure Council and staff are all helping to educate the public and getting behind the mission, but in the past they didn't feel like they had that support and said they were getting harassed constantly.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Barbee adjourned the meeting at 10:27 AM.