

CAROLINA BEACH

Town Council Retreat

Tuesday, August 27, 2024 – 8:30 AM

Multipurpose Room, 1121 N. Lake Park Blvd, Carolina Beach, NC



MEETING MINUTES

Council Members Present:

Mayor Lynn Barbee

Council Member Jay Healy

Council Member Mike Hoffer

Mayor Pro Tem Deb LeCompte

Council Member Joe Benson

Staff Members Present:

Bruce Oakley, Town Manager

Jeremy Hardison, Community Development Director

Mark Meyer, Public Utilities Director

Vic Ward, Police Chief

Debbie Hall, Finance Director

Sheila Nicolson, Executive Assistant

Eric Jelinski, Parks & Rec Director

Brian Stanberry, Public Works Director

Kim Ward, Town Clerk

Noel Fox, Town Attorney

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Attorney Contract- Town Attorney Noel Fox presented a request to increase her firm's hourly rate from \$200 per hour to \$300 per hour. This request also includes increases in the hourly rates for their support staff. Their firm has not requested a rate increase since they started with the Town in 2012.

Mayor Barbee made a motion to approve the contract amendment with Craige and Fox PLLC, increasing the hourly rate for the Town Attorney from \$200 per hour to \$300 per hour as well as the listed hourly rates for the Paralegals and Legal Assistants. This first amendment shall be retroactive to July 1, 2024. Motion passed unanimously.

Budget Amendment for Gymnasium HVAC (Emergency Replacement)- Debbie Hall presented a budget amendment to replace the HVAC unit in the gymnasium at the Rec Center. This item was requested in the initial budget for FY24/25 but was cut with the anticipation of it lasting one more season. The unit went out a couple of months ago and needs to be replaced.

Mayor Barbee made a motion to appropriate \$86,750 to account 10-620-074 Parks and Rec Capital over \$10,000 from the General Fund fund balance to replace the air conditioners and duct work in the Recreation Center Gymnasium. Motion passed unanimously.

Financial Update – Debbie Hall gave a detailed account of the final numbers for budget year 23/24. The estimated fund balance is 45% or \$9 million. The final numbers will be available after the audit report in October. The ad valorem collection rate is 99.58%. Sales and use tax collections for FY24 are up 5.08% over FY23 but \$234,474 shorter than the amounts budgeted. Parking revenue is \$250,430 over the prior fiscal year. Parking management is up \$76,125 over the previous fiscal year and Freeman Park

Management is \$6,551 less than the previous fiscal year. Room Occupancy Tax collections are up 6.2%. \$1,198,229 was paid out to general fund debt services. The \$4,061,140 NC Land & Water Fund Grant for Freeman Park was used to pay off the \$2,985,921 loan for Freeman Park. It also covered the matching funds for the 1810 Canal Drive CAMA Grant and the appropriated funds for the Ocean Boulevard sidewalk project. The remaining balance of \$2256,772 was put into the sand fund.

Council asked staff to consider setting up a separate fund exclusively for Freeman Park.

Parking Presentation – Pivot Parking gave an update on their revenue numbers. They provided a large amount of data on parking statistics such as the number of parking transactions per day and what states and cities visitors come from. The top four states in order are North Carolina, Virginia, South Carolina, and Ohio.

Some of the changes that were implemented in 2024 include the addition of 2 new leased lots, addition of one Town owned lot, parking rates updated to include premium and non-premium lots, citation rates decreased from \$100 to \$60, citation discount rate changed from 50% to 25%.

As of July 2024, there are a total of 1,417 parking spaces, 57 are handicapped, 60 golf cart, and 13 are 30-minute free parking spaces.

Freeman Park early bird sales were down 970 from 2023 to 2024. Annual pass sales are up by 798. Daily sales are up \$85,373 from 2023. There were 951 camping reservations totaling \$82,090.

The overall total revenue including Freeman Park from July 2023 to June 2024 was \$4,493,080 which is a 14% increase from FY23 at \$3,955,756. The total expenses for FY24 were \$625,219 for a net income to the Town of \$3,867,860.

Pivot Parking representatives had the following recommendations for FY25:

- Fixed camera enforcement
- Updated kiosk to allow for tap and go payments
- EV charging stations and soon to be mandatory EV fire blankets
- Advanced citation platform
- Truck replacement
- License Plate Reader upgrade
- Extend Pivot contract for one additional 2-year extension

Mayor Barbee suggested lowering the Fayetteville Avenue lot to increase the number of customers.

Strategic Plan Review – Bruce gave an update on the [2024-2025 Strategic Plan](#) that Council put together in January. He reviewed the actions that staff has taken to meet their objectives.

Long Range Planning Capital Planning – Department Heads listed out a few large ticket items that they anticipate budgeting over the next few years. They include:

- Fire – Ordering a new engine in December with the expectation of a 3-year build, a ladder truck in 2026, and 3 additional firefighters to fully staff the engine while having 2 on the ladder truck.

- Parks – Residents have expressed an interest in the conceptual plan for Ryder Lewis Park. This project was ranked as low priority. Council expressed concern over the lack of space at the Rec Center and was concerned that we were turning away activities due space constraints. They would like to see additional space provided around the Town Hall campus for these activities.
- Public Works – A new street sweeper with a cost of around \$500,000.
- Public Utilities – A new vactor/hydro excavator for around \$500,000. All other items have been identified in the bond.
- Police – They are required to upgrade their radios to the Viper system. They are \$5,000 per radio. They are also considering adding personnel after they fully analyze the need. Proximity may have a major impact on this decision.

Community Building – Brian Stanberry reviewed the numbers to repair or demolish the community building (the old library). It will cost at least \$250,000 to repair it, or around \$20,000 to demolish it. Council had mixed feelings about the future of the building, but all agreed that they would like to see the space better utilized. They discussed redesigning it for the Chamber of Commerce, History Center and Welcome Center. They asked staff to move forward with replacing the roof and bring back ideas and costs for redesigning the current structure. Council asked staff to have everything removed from the building in the meantime.

Residential Parking- Jeremy Hardison reported that no parking signs have been installed in the residential area around Spinnaker Point. Police and Pivot Parking have been requested to increase their presence and enforcement in this area. Staff will re-evaluate this at the beginning of next season.

Traffic Calming Devices/Procedures – Mr. Hardison presented some suggestions for developing a process for residents to request stop signs/speed limit reduction/speed bumps. Council supports a defined process and asked staff to bring ideas back to a workshop.

Harper Avenue Parking – Council Member Benson presented ideas for a new design for Harper Avenue. He also asked staff to start enforcing code violations in the first two blocks of Harper. Staff will take Council’s recommendations to TRC and report back at a workshop.

CSRM (Beach Nourishment Project) – The Army Corps of Engineers is requiring the Town to identify 767 parking spaces where Town passes are not accepted to move forward with the project. The Town attorney is working with staff to provide this list.

Freeman Park – The Town Attorney said that the Freeman Family Monument is still on the project list. They are waiting for the Freeman family to get together and come up with the details. Some discussion was had about the pinch point and if staff planned to open it back up for vehicular access. There were mixed opinions on that topic, so Council asked to take a deep dive into that at an upcoming workshop. Mr. Oakley said that he would also like to evaluate camping and get a true cost on providing that amenity.

Council Member Healy said that he was not sure if a committee was needed for Freeman Park. Ms. Fox stated that if one is established in the future, there would need to be criteria for specific positions on the committee.

Police/Code Enforcement Issues- The amusement rides are in violation of encroaching on town property. Mr. Oakley said that the owner of the amusement company brought in new workers and that seems to

have cut down on some of the complaints. Council recommended that the Town issue stop work orders next year if they do not submit a site plan.

Mayor Barbee said that he is upset about cars parking on the sidewalks and asked that the Town and/or Pivot start enforcing that Ordinance.

MPT LeCompte asked staff to start enforcing the Ordinance on leaving trash receptacles in the right of way longer than 24 hours after pickup.

Centennial Celebration – Employees are wearing new hats and shirts with the centennial logo. The water tower will be painted with the logo. Centennial events will begin in March of 2025.

Disposition of 1710 Canal Drive- MPT LeCompte said the intent for this property was to create a handicap accessible viewing area. Staff will bring back some options for Council to consider.

Presentation by the Carolina Beach Police Foundation – The Police Department was awarded \$11,000 from the [Carolina Beach Police Foundation](#) to fund drone equipment and officer health and safety programs. This non-profit foundation raises money for programs that improve officer safety, training, retention, health and wellness.

Council Comments:

MPT LeCompte – The landscaping around the Brandy Myers Playground needs attention.

Council Member Hoffer – His goal is to have the sidewalks clear and handicapped accessible. He suggested adding wheel stops so that vehicles will not park over the sidewalk. He also suggested putting fencing around the new volleyball court to keep golf carts from parking there.

Mayor Barbee – Duke Energy is leaving large mounds of concrete where they are replacing power poles. He asked the staff to contact them about cleaning it up.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.